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CHOICE

Independent information for smart consumers

Tests

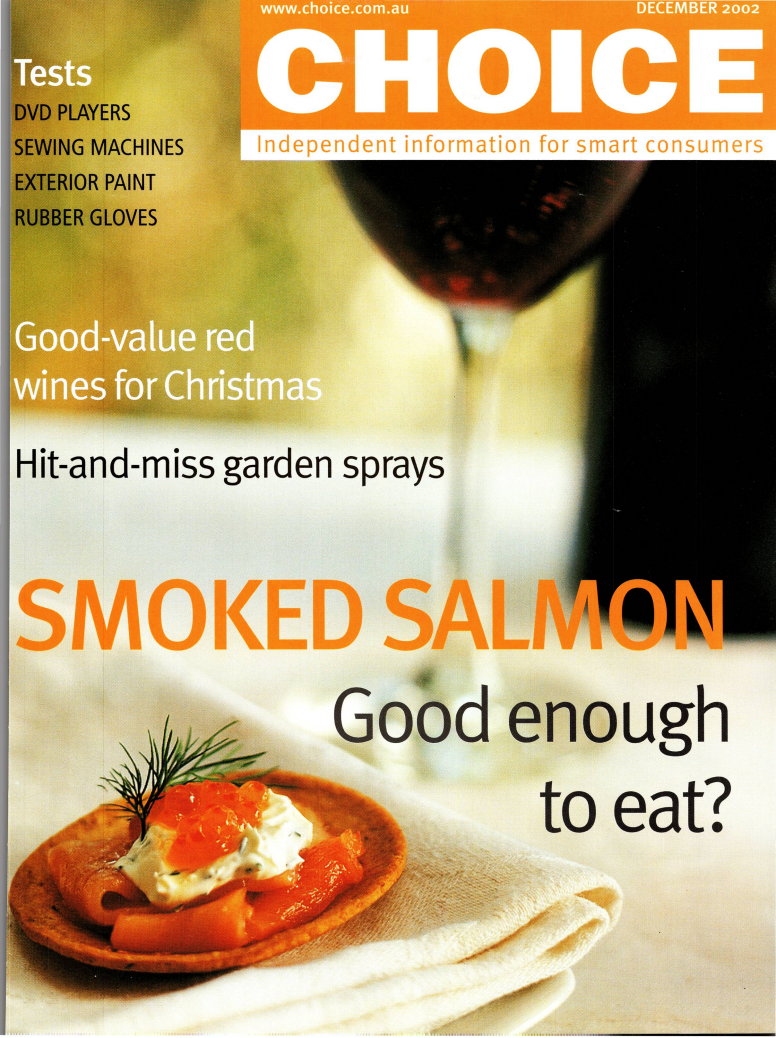
DVD PLAYERS
SEWING MACHINES
EXTERIOR PAINT
RUBBER GLOVES

Good-value red wines for Christmas

Hit-and-miss garden sprays

SMOKED SALMON

Good enough to eat?



Jane Mackenzie, Editor

Roses are red, fungi are thriving...

It's the time of year for getting out and enjoying your garden again — but it's also the time garden pests and fungi thrive. Unless you're into homemade deterrents or pesticides you've probably bought a commercial spray or concentrate to deal with them.

You could be disappointed. CHOICE tests found that seven out of 11 garden sprays or concentrates containing pyrethrum and/or triforine for killing pests and fungi didn't contain anything like the amount of active ingredient they're claimed to. While they're a snapshot of the market, there are trends with these active ingredients (see page 15 for the full story) and it's likely other sprays with the same ingredients could be similarly weak.

This is a bad case of certification not working properly (the active ingredient content of all these products has to be certified) and consumers being ripped off paying for products that don't work. We're working with the relevant authority to try to get the problem fixed, but in the meantime, follow the advice in our article to have the best chance of buying an effective garden spray.

If you can still relax after the thought of all those aphids and thrips chomping away unchecked at your roses, our red wine report (page 8) has some good news for your Christmas celebrations — plenty of good-value red blends rated highly by our expert tasters. Almost half the wines tasted cost $10 or less, and most of the top half-dozen in our *What to buy* list cost no more than $13.

If you were fancying a bit of smoked salmon to go with the drinks, though, take a good look at what you're buying. Our tasting panel of restaurateurs found only four brands of vacuum-packed salmon out of 16 that they'd want to serve to their guests, marking the rest down for their flavour, aroma and/or texture. Follow our buying advice in the article (page 19) to increase your chances of getting smoked salmon you'll really want to eat.

All in all, we hope this issue will help make you a more savvy shopper in the Christmas buying frenzy and New Year sales splurge. From everyone at CHOICE, have a great festive season and a healthy, prosperous and peaceful New Year.

Jane Mackenzie, Editor

CHOICE

is published by the Australian Consumers' Association

YOUR LETTERS

We welcome the letters you send us — please always include a daytime telephone number so we can contact you quickly if we want to follow up your letter. We're sorry we can't answer every letter we receive, but we do use them in our research. Thanks for taking the time to keep in touch.

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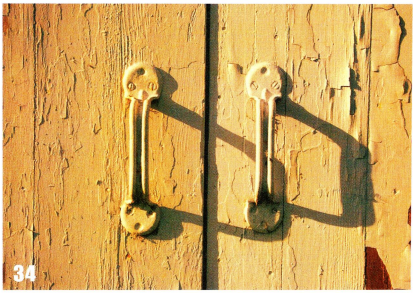
YOUR NEXT ISSUE ...

... will be the combined Jan/Feb 2003 edition. You should receive it in very late January or early February.



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UPDATE

COMBO BLENDERS/FOOD PROCESSORS

CHOICE, October 2002

The **KENWOOD Multi Pro FP480** we bought had a thin slicer/shredder, a julienne disk and a storage unit for them. Kenwood has now told us these are only available as part of a 'bonus' offer — you should be able to identify it by a sticker on the packaging. The bonus offer should be available through to the Christmas period.

FRIDGES

CHOICE, November 2002

Since publication, the manufacturer has told us the **KELVINATOR N300F** has been upgraded technically and cosmetically, and that our test results no longer accurately represent the version of this model that's currently available. The new model (**N300H**) is claimed to have improved energy efficiency and temperature control and reduced noise.

DIGITAL CAMERAS

If you're thinking of buying a new compact camera, there's a good chance you're considering the pros and cons of going digital. Our sister publication, *Computer* CHOICE, recently tested 31 digital cameras across a range of prices.

The test found there are acceptable performers across a range of resolutions (the amount of detail a camera can capture to create an image) and prices, and that a digital camera may be an economical buy, especially if you're a keen photographer.

However, moving to digital can initially be quite costly. If you're happy with your current camera and don't mind the inconvenience of waiting for prints from your local photolab, there may not be much incentive to change. On the other hand, if you think you'd like a digital camera — to quickly and easily share photos electronically — consider how you plan to use it before buying.

- If you enjoy sharing images with family and friends as soon as they're taken, a good monitor will be important, and the ability to connect to a TV might be useful.
- Image storage and memory capacity will be important for the photographer who plans to use the camera for travelling and enjoys sharing photos via email or even printing large-size images.
- For most people, ease of use is important, as is a good flash and battery type and life.

The *Computer* CHOICE test checked each camera's image quality, memory capacity, battery usage, ease of use, display features, manual and automatic functions and how well it would suit different users.

- Overall the **FUJIFILM FinePix S602 Zoom** ($1550) is well ahead of the rest. It's not cheap but it outperforms a number of more expensive cameras.
- The **CANON PowerShot S30** ($1299) is smaller than the **FUJIFILM**, versatile, easy to use and has acceptable image quality.
- The **SONY DSCP71** ($999) works well and is quite cheap for a 3.2 megapixel (that is, reasonably high-resolution) camera.
- Overall the **CANON PowerShot A40** ($749) and **NIKON CoolPix 2500** ($699) are equal best of the 2 megapixel cameras in the test. The **CANON** would be better for situations where battery life is critical, but the **NIKON** is easier to use.

For more information and a detailed comparison of the cameras, see *Computer* CHOICE, Nov/Dec 2002. To subscribe, call 1800 069 552 or see page 49.

ANTHONY SAWERS

Good news on soft-serve

Seven years ago we tested soft-serve ice cream and found more than half the samples had unacceptably high levels of bacteria.

In true wowser fashion we warned people off soft-serve ice cream, saying, "Such a poor-quality product is a potential health hazard, so we can't recommend it, especially for children."

At the time a number of major chains (except **McDONALD'S**) were as much to blame for the poor quality as the small operators were (mobile vans, milk bars and corner stores).

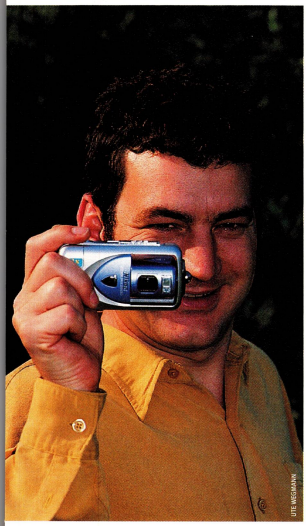
Seven years on, we're pleased to report there's been a vast improvement in the quality of soft-serve — out of 44 samples tested, only a handful could be described as of questionable quality and none would endanger your health. We didn't find any of the nasty bacteria we looked for — *E coli*, *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Listeria monocytogenes*.

We tested soft-serve ice cream from four of each of the following chains:

- BURGER KING
- DONUT KING
- HUNGRY JACK'S
- McDONALD'S
- MR WHIPPY
- WENDY'S

We also tested soft-serve from 10 mobile vans and 10 independent outlets. All samples were purchased in Sydney.

While the situation seems to have improved overall, operators shouldn't rest on their laurels. Soft-serve is just the type of food that bacteria thrive on (not only because it contains milk, but because it spends part of its life in a machine where bacteria



can grow comfortably in crevices, tubes and reservoirs), and any slip in hygiene measures could lead to problems.

There are a number of critical steps the operator must take, including taking care with personal hygiene, preparing only enough soft-serve mix for each day's use, storing all prepared batches at less than 5°C, never leaving mix in the machine overnight and always cleaning and sterilising all parts of the machine every day.

So before you buy, ask yourself a few questions. Does the operator look clean and tidy? Do the machine and premises look clean? Does it look as though they sell more than a couple of ice creams a week? (If there's poor turnover of product there's more chance for it to sit around with bacteria multiplying.) If the answer's yes to them all, it's a good start.

DEET vs disease

Worldwide, over 700 million people are infected with diseases transmitted by mosquitoes, and malaria alone kills three million every year.

While malaria and other dangerous mosquito-borne diseases — such as dengue fever and yellow fever — are rare or non-existent in Australia, Ross River virus and the similar Barmah Forest virus can cause debilitating illnesses. With summer and mozzie season here, a good repellent — along with protective clothing and avoiding infested areas as far as possible — is a must.

Repellents can be divided into two classes: synthetic chemicals and plant-derived essential oils. The most effective chemical insect repellent on the market is N, N-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide, or DEET. Products containing DEET have been shown to give long-lasting protection, depending on the concentration applied. When CHOICE last tested repellents (in January 1995), DEET products were clear winners over plant-based products.

In recent studies conducted in the US, up to 15 volunteers tested the effectiveness of seven plant-based repellents (containing citronella, soy-bean or eucalyptus oils), four DEET products, one repellent containing IR3535 (which is used in repellents mainly in Europe and the US), three repellent-impregnated wristbands (including two impregnated with DEET) and a moisturiser with claimed repellent effects.

As in our tests, DEET-based repellents provided complete protection for the longest time, and the duration increased with concentration. Protection ranged from an average of around 90 minutes (4.75% concentration) to five hours (23.8%).

The eucalyptus-based product lasted an average of two hours, the soy-bean oil product around 90 minutes, while the IR3535 and citronella-based products lasted less than half an hour. The wristbands and moisturiser had little or no effect.

Though highly effective, DEET can have unpleasant side effects ranging from dermatitis to encephalitis (a brain tissue inflammation). Young children are especially vulnerable to toxic effects if they use too much. However, since 1960, fewer than 50 cases of serious toxic effects have been reported in the medical literature, and many of these cases involved prolonged, heavy, frequent or whole-body usage of DEET.

When applied responsibly and reasonably, DEET-based repellents can be expected to provide safe and long-lasting insect bite protection. So if you're serious about avoiding mozzie bites, go for a repellent that contains DEET.

Can you help?

SWITCHING BANKS

Have you changed bank accounts, your home loan or credit card? Or even taken all your business to a different bank, credit union or building society?

If so, we'd love to hear from you. We'd especially be interested in:

- Why did you switch — did you getter a better deal or were you just fed up?
- When did you switch?
- Which banks (or other institutions) did you switch from and to?
- Was it easy? If it wasn't straightforward, what were the problems?
- Would you do it again and recommend to it to other people?

Write to **Switching Banks**, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204, or switchbanks@choice.com.au, by January 15, 2003.

Thank you for your help

Can you help?

RETIREMENT VILLAGES

Have you recently bought a unit or villa in a retirement village? Perhaps you're currently looking at making such a purchase for yourself or for elderly parents.

CHOICE would like to hear about your experiences. We're currently preparing an article on the financial aspects of buying property in a retirement village. We'd like to hear from people who've bought or sold retirement village units, in order to incorporate your experiences with contracts, loans, pricing and management companies.

Write to: **Retirement villages**, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204, or email retirementvillage@choice.com.au, by January 31, 2003.

Thank you for your help.

Yet another reason for children to drink cow's milk

In western countries, most dietary calcium comes from dairy products. Children need lots of calcium, especially in their growing years when the skeleton is forming, to prevent osteoporosis in later life. (See *Food Bites*, page 14, for more on kids and milk.)

But drinking plenty of cow's milk during childhood doesn't just prevent osteoporosis in later life. A recent study found that children who had a history of chronic milk avoidance were significantly shorter, and heavier for their height, as well as having poorer bone health.

The November issue of CHOICE *Health Reader* reports on an NZ study that looked at the bone health of 50 children aged between three and 10. They had 'chronically' avoided milk — either because they disliked the taste, suffered from milk intolerance or because of the family's lifestyle choice — and had a low calcium intake.

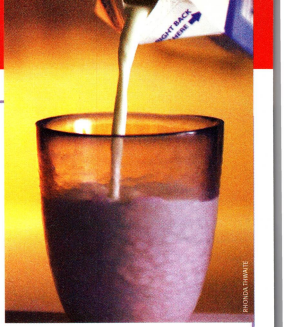
The children were found to have a lower bone mineral density (a measure of bone mass) than a control group and were at significant risk of bone fractures.

Unless there are underlying medical reasons, children should eat plenty of dairy products, the study concludes. And for those children who can't get enough calcium in their diet, the use of calcium supplements may be warranted on professional nutrition or medical advice.

Also in this issue of *Health Reader*:

A recent US study involving 4400 men and women found that those who nominated wine as their 'beverage of choice' were less likely to smoke and had a healthier diet than those who drank other types of alcohol such as beer or spirits. Overall, the people who drank alcohol exercised more and ate more vegetables than non-drinkers. So many of the health benefits attributed to red wine may in fact be due to many wine drinkers' healthier lifestyle.

If you'd like to subscribe to *Health Reader*, call us on 1800 069 552.



RHONDA STAWATE

Don't be misled

After the front wheel broke off two samples of the **KIWI Espresso** jogger stroller in our August 2002 test, we put it firmly in the 'not recommended' basket. We were also concerned that a child could reach and release the lock for the forward foldable section, collapsing the stroller.

As the magazine was starting to reach subscribers, a consumer contacted us to say the front wheel of her **KIWI Espresso** had suffered a similar failure.

As always, we'd let the manufacturer know of our findings and given them a chance to comment before publication.

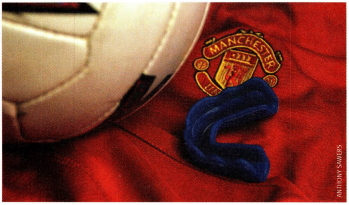
Some time later, an alert consumer became aaware of documents being given to customers by the Australian distributor, apparently written by the New Zealand manufacturer of the stroller, Phil & Teds [*sic*] Most Excellent Buggy Co. In them, the managing director says, among other claims, that the **KIWI Espresso** "is a safe product", "has a zero break experience with J-bars" and that the company had no response from CHOICE when it requested more information about our tests (in fact we discussed the test and results with the managing director himself).

The documents also imply CHOICE's test results are invalid for the strollers and that more generally they're 'wrong', that in one other case the ACCC had confirmed that our tests were wrong (it hasn't), and that we changed our published views on the **KIWI Espresso** after discussion with the manufacturer (we didn't — but there's a contradiction here of the claim not to have spoken to us).

That a manufacturer should go to so much trouble to apparently try to mislead consumers about the validity of our tests could be considered flattering. But, just so no-one is misled: we stand by our published verdict on the **KIWI Espresso** stroller, and have received no valid evidence from any source to suggest that we shouldn't.

ANTHONY CASEY

yourletters



MATTHEW SAUNDERS

Watch your mouth

I'm impressed you used a prominent sportsperson, John Eales, in your article on mouthguards in the July 2002 issue.

My three boys all play rugby union and even though their club (The Waratahs JRUFC) provides a mouthguard to all registered players, two out of three of my boys have custom-made ones. My eldest son has braces and because of his teeth changing with the braces, it's easier for him to fit a new one every couple of weeks.

My other two sons have been using the custom-made ones for several years and will continue to do so. They're fitted to their teeth so that they aren't loose and the boys don't worry about them through the game. It can be expensive, though — one son lost his after the first time he wore it this year!

I didn't find them suitable for younger children because they lose their first teeth and also their teeth are continually growing and their mouths change (they really should mould a new mouthguard a couple of times through a season).

Thanks again.

Alison Farrar
Kotara, NSW

There's no doubt among experts such as the Australian Dental Association that a custom-made guard is the most effective protection you can get. However, as Alison points out, custom-made guards can be expensive, especially if you have several children and they're growing fast. But there's no getting away from the fact that proper fit is the key — and that's where custom-made guards have the edge. If you want one, see your dentist or a dental prosthetist or technician.

Security industry responds

The Australian Security Industry Association (ASIAL) is disturbed to read in your August edition that offers for 'free' home security systems, with certain conditions and financial obligations attached, are still being made to the general public. It's a matter of grave concern that such representations may be misleading.

This is an issue that ASIAL has taken up with its member companies, and we're now in the final stages of developing a code of practice for the marketing of home security systems to combat this.

This code will soon be implemented and in place for consumers to use, should they require recourse. We'll be pleased to follow up the complaint from Mr Vournazos, should that be his wish.

Terry Murphy
Executive Director, ASIAL
Crows Nest, NSW

Personalise your codes

I've had a nasty experience with our Panasonic phone with answering machine. It works very well. However, some sick person dialled into our phone and changed our greeting message to something quite revolting, so that anyone calling our phone wouldn't hear our message when the answering machine clicked in but the disgusting new message.

We called the police because we thought someone had broken into the house and left the message. Now we've discovered that if you don't change the factory-set default code when you set up the machine, anyone can access your message bank, or change your greetings.

Tim Readman
Coromandel Valley, SA

We'd already discovered during our home safes test that safe manufacturers tend to use the same default code for electronic digital locks, and advised consumers to personalise theirs straightaway. The same message applies to answering machines. Even if phone manufacturers use different default codes, a personalised one should protect your privacy better. So, if your machine is programmed to let you change the remote access code, personalise it. Panasonic says instructions for how to do it are in the manual.

THUMBS UP!

▮ Julie Harm, via internet, awards a thumbs-up to **Felgate & Moore**, importer of Dr Stuart's Herbal Teas, which not only told her where she could find her favourite tea when she could no longer buy it in Wollongong, but also threw in a box of the tea to keep her going.

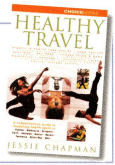
▮ Chris Baker of Florey, ACT, gives three thumbs-up: to **Margaret White** for writing *Put it in writing* (see page 24 to order the book), which helped her write a successful letter of complaint to Nokia Australia; to Vish and Mark and the team at **Strathfield Car Radios** in Belconnen, who were extremely helpful when dealing with her phone repairs; and to **Nokia**, which replaced her mobile phone with a brand-new one.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

We want to hear from you — your experiences help our research and often let other readers know about scams and rip-offs.

To thank you for writing to us, *Your Letters* awards a prize of a CHOICE book to the 'Letter of the month'. This month's winner, Tim Readman of Coromandel Valley, SA, receives *Healthy Travel*, or any other book of his choice from Consumer Bookshelf, pages 24 to 26.

We're sorry we don't have the resources to answer all your letters personally, and in the magazine we may edit them or print only an extract. See page 2 for how to reach us.



EVERYDAY R

Our test of 64 top-selling red wine ble
good-value bargains.

Since the mid-1990s, wine production has more than doubled in Australia, surpassing one billion litres in 2000–01. Our wine exports, too, are consistently on the rise, having more than quadrupled over the last decade. Bottled reds recorded the largest increase in domestic and export sales in 2000–01.

For this year's Christmas wine test we chose 64 bottled red wine blends — the top-selling brands as identified by three large retailers. They're made from well- and lesser-known grape varieties: cabernet sauvignon, shiraz or merlot primarily, blended with cabernet franc, grenache, malbec, mourvèdre (mataro) or ruby cabernet. For more on wine blends, see *Popular red blends*, below.

As a group, these commonly bought blends are surprisingly inexpensive. Almost half of the 64 bottles cost $10 or less and only two more than $20.

It's perhaps less surprising that among this group of relatively inexpensive wines, only one scored the equivalent of a gold medal at a wine show (with a score of 18.5) and just five the equivalent of a silver (17–18.4 — see note 1, page 12, for more on the scoring system).

This is not to say, though, that the wines overall were rated poorly — on the contrary. Twenty-six (or 41%) scored 15.5–16.9, the equivalent of a bronze medal. These are good, very drinkable wines — and some are quite easy on the pocket.

The *What to buy* list includes all the wines with a gold or silver medal-equivalent score — all available for well below $20 per bottle.

IN A NUTSHELL

- **On test: 64 top-selling** *red wine blends — made from well- and lesser-known grape varieties.*
- **Five experts identified** *quite a few good drops selling for around $10 or even less.*

POPULAR RED BLENDS

Australian wines are usually distinguished by the grapes they're made from rather than the region they're grown in, as is customary elsewhere. In France, for example, the most famous of wine-producing countries, particular grape varieties are blended to produce, say, a traditional Bordeaux (cabernet sauvignon, merlot and cabernet franc) or Rhône (grenache, shiraz, mourvèdre) wine.

Winemakers in Australia also blend some wines the traditional French way, but here fewer rules regulate which varieties can be used. Our most traditional blend — cabernet sauvignon and shiraz — has produced many big, old-fashioned Aussie reds.

ULLI WEGMANN

EDS

found quite a few

Shiraz/cabernet sauvignon blends

Shiraz and cabernet sauvignon are currently the most widely grown grape varieties in Australia. They tend to do well in many regions, and good vintages are often released as single-variety wines — a 1998 cabernet sauvignon, for example, which must contain at least 85% of cabernet sauvignon grapes.

However, not all years bring perfect conditions for all grape varieties, and a good year for, say, cabernet sauvignon may not be such a good one for shiraz or merlot grown in the same region. That's when blending comes in. Grapes that on their own wouldn't produce a wine that meets market expectations can still improve the structure of other wines.

A straight cabernet sauvignon, for example, can have everything going for it, yet it may still leave a 'gap' in the middle of your palate — it's known for its 'hollow middle', sometimes called the 'doughnut' wine. Smooth and flavoursome shiraz, on the other hand, tends to have a big, sweet palate which, when blended with cabernet sauvignon, improves the resulting wine's structure and mouth-feel.

Merlot blends

Merlot has become popular in the US and its popularity is catching on in Australia, both as a single-variety wine and in blends. It's currently the fifth most widely grown variety in Australia.

This grape variety often produces more singular, straightforward wines that tend to display one rather than a complex combination of various flavours and aromas. Merlot is valued for its gentler tannins and berry fruit flavours and is extensively used in blends to add softness and 'length at the back'.

Other blends

Cabernet franc, grenache, malbec and the other grapes used in the blends we tested are less widely grown in Australia and largely used in blends. Cabernet franc, for example, tends to add softness and fragrance to cabernet sauvignon; grenache and malbec can add spicy, fruity, peppery or earthy flavours.

Wine matters

Store wine bottles:

- At a cool, even temperature, ideally at around 12–18°C.
- In a dry and dark spot, such as under the house, under stairs or in a cupboard or, of course, in a purpose-built wine cellar.
- Lying down, possibly in the cardboard carton you buy a dozen in.

Don't store them:

- Anywhere near fluorescent lights, direct sunlight, a heat source, water heater, air conditioner or on top of the fridge.
- In places where the temperature fluctuates considerably (during the day and night or from summer to winter) or they're exposed to vibration.
- For months in the fridge.

Drink red wine:

- Slightly below room temperature (about 15–18°C).
- From a big glass with a rim narrower than the base, so you can swirl the wine around and savour the aroma.
- Younger red wines in particular can benefit from letting them 'breathe'. Remove the cork about two hours before serving so the wine's exposed to air, which will dissipate bottle odours.
- Older red wines can benefit from decanting. Gently pour the wine into a glass carafe so the sediment stays in the bottle.

WHAT TO BUY

LEASINGHAM Bastion Clare Valley Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon 2000	$12.70
ANNIE'S LANE Clare Valley Cabernet Merlot 2001	$18.00
EAGLEHAWK Shiraz Merlot Cabernet 2001	$9.00
GRAMP'S Cabernet Merlot 2000	$12.95
HARDY'S Insignia Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz 2000	$11.00
PENFOLDS Koonunga Hill Shiraz Cabernet 2001	$12.95

ANTHONY SAMPERS

Brand, name and vintage (in rank order, alphabetical when equal)	Target price ($)*	1 Tasting score	2 Tasting notes
VERY GOOD			
LEASINGHAM Bastion Clare Valley Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon 2000	12.70	18.5	Deep dark red colour; aromas of maraschino cherries, cinnamon and eucalyptus; rich plum flavours; sweet, rounded palate, spicy oak finish, great texture.
ANNIE'S LANE Clare Valley Cabernet Merlot 2001	18.00	17.5	Dark red/purple colour; aromas of Black Forest cake, dark fruits and spearmint; fresher berry fruit and spice flavours; palate of good weight, mouth-puckering tannins.
EAGLEHAWK Shiraz Merlot Cabernet 2001	9.00	17	Dark red/purple colour; sweet and ripe berry, coconut, confectionery aromas; sweet palate without being cloying, warm, soft and rounded.
GRAMP'S Cabernet Merlot 2000	12.95	17	Dark red colour; cooked dark fruit aromas with a sharp coffee/coconut, oaky note; savoury, dark fruit and strong oak flavours; dull, sweet palate with soft, rounded tannins.
HARDYS Insignia Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz 2000	11.00	17	Dense ruby red colour; big, smoky oak nose with liqueur cherry, blackcurrant and coffee notes; rich, hot and drying palate of spicy plums and stewed fruit.
PENFOLDS Koonunga Hill Shiraz Cabernet 2001	12.95	17	Dark red colour with purple hues; aromas of mulberry, cherry and blackcurrant on a spicy oak nose; intense berry flavours; oaky, supple tannins on the palate.
GOOD			
PENFOLD'S Rawson's Retreat Shiraz Cabernet 2001	9.00	16.5	Deeper red colour; mint/wild berry/herbal aromas on a smoky oak nose; big palate of sweet, ripe cherry and strawberry with dusty oak tannins, drying finish.
RIPAROSSO Illuminati 2000 **(A)**	10.70	16.5	Vibrant purple/red colour; dusty, intense vanilla bean and berry nose; blackberry jube and cherry flavours; drying tannins.
WOLF BLASS Red Label Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon 2001	11.00	16.5	Dark red/purple colour; dusty oak, plum, clove and vanilla aromas; soft and mouth-filling palate with some warmth, fine tannins and a long finish.
LINDEMANS Cawarra Shiraz Cabernet 2001	6.00	16	Dark red colour; clean, lifted, perfumed nose of sweet fruit with choc-cherry notes; big, soft style with a sweet, jammy palate and a hint of mint.
McWILLIAM'S Inheritance Shiraz Merlot 2001	6.00	16	Brick-red colour; sweet nose with fruit and peppermint aromas; confectionery/bright berry flavours; soft, sweet, simple and light.
PENFOLDS Bin 389 Cabernet Shiraz 1999	32.00	16	Dense, dark red/purple colour; licorice, coffee, violets and leather aromas on a dusty oak nose; rich dark fruit flavours and furry tannins on a mouth-filling palate.
PETER LEHMANN Clancy's Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot and Cabernet Franc 2000	10.00	16	Medium red colour with a brownish tint; complex savoury, developed nutty oak nose; cherry flavours; light and soft, tangy palate, nutty/charry finish.
QUEEN ADELAIDE Regency Red 2001 **(B)**	6.50	16	Dark brick-red colour; coffee and cherry/mulberry aromas; cherry and charry oak flavours; light-bodied with some alcohol warmth and good length.
REDBANK The Long Paddock Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon 2000	12.00	16	Dark red/purple colour; intense blackcurrant, spicy clove and pepper nose; ripe blackcurrant flavours on the palate; soft, velvet-textured.
TAYLORS Promised Land Shiraz Cabernet 2001	12.20	16	Dard red colour with purple tint; soft, jammy nose of dark fruits with a smoky/clove hint; spicy raisin/berry flavours on a rich, good-textured palate with fine weight and high acid.
BROOKRIDGE Shiraz Cabernet 2001	6.50	15.5	Clear, bright brick-red colour; gamy, herbal nose with cassis/mulberry and spicy, dark fruit aromas; plummy fruit flavours; mid-palate sweetness leading to a shortish finish.
BROWN BROTHERS Everton Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon Malbec 2000	12.00	15.5	Red/purple colour; perfumed nose of dark fruits and pencil-shaving oak; tangy with some green fruit showing on the palate; a little watery lacking mid-palate weight.
DE BORTOLI Montage Cabernet Merlot 2001	9.00	15.5	Brick-red colour; lifted violets, prune and berry aromas with a little oak; sweet cherry, savoury and nutty oak flavours on a soft palate.
LEASINGHAM Clare Valley Bin 56 Cabernet Malbec 1999	19.00	15.5	Dark red colour; aromas of tarry, ripe fruit and smoky, spicy oak; rich palate of earthy forest fruit, strong tannins and a drying oak, porty finish.
MATTHEW LANG Shiraz Cabernet 2001	4.50	15.5	Medium red colour; strawberry and cherry aromas in a sweet, confectionery style; soft, sweet, approachable light red with a bright and fresh palate.
McWILLIAM'S Inheritance Shiraz Cabernet 2001	5.50	15.5	Red/purple colour; green, dark berry and cherry aromas; cherry flavours on a sweeter palate.
METALA Langhorne Creek Shiraz Cabernet 2000	17.20	15.5	Dark red colour; aromas of eucalypt and nutty, charry oak; coffee and ripe fruit flavours on a palate overpowered by oak.
NOTTAGE HILL Cabernet Shiraz 2000	9.00	15.5	Dark red colour with purple hues; savoury nose of ripe plum and confectionery aromas; cherry flavours; palate of light-medium weight, smoky finish.
ORLANDO RUSSET RIDGE Coonawarra Cabernet Shiraz Merlot 1998	18.00	15.5	Deep red colour with brown hues; complex aromas of smoky bacon and pencil-shavings; soft berry fruit upfront on the palate followed by juicy plum and chocolate flavours.
POET'S CORNER Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon Cabernet Franc 2001	10.00	15.5	Vibrant ruby red/purple colour; 'Cherry Ripe'/plum and earthy/tobacco aromas; sweet berry and charry oak flavours lacking intensity on the soft palate.
ROSEMOUNT ESTATE Cabernet Merlot 2001	8.00	15.5	Dark red/purple colour; lolly-sweet nose reminiscent of cherry cola; sweet cherry and jammy flavours; soft palate, simple and approachable.
ROSEMOUNT ESTATE Grenache Shiraz 2001	9.80	15.5	Bright red/purple colour; sweetish nose of choc-cherry, lifted redcurrant and cola aromas; coconut and choc-cherry flavours on a sweet palate; simple, easy-drinking.
ROSEMOUNT ESTATE Shiraz Cabernet 2001	8.00	15.5	Deep ruby colour with a hint of brown; dark, concentrated berry nose with spicy/charry oak showing; sweet, earthy flavours of blackberry and cherry on a soft, rounded palate.
ROSEMOUNT Shiraz Mataro Grenache 2001	8.00	15.5	Medium cherry-red colour; spicy, sweet confectionery nose of black cherry and fruitcake; flavours of ripe fruits and fruitcake; sweet palate.
TYRRELL'S OLD WINERY Cabernet Merlot 2001	12.00	15.5	Vibrant red/purple colour; dense, big nose with a jammy fruit/confectionery character; sweet, ripe fruit flavours on a spicy palate; firm, drying tannins, traditional style.
YALUMBA Barossa Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz 1999	13.00	15.5	Dark brick-red colour; aromas of coffee, pepper and smoky oak; sweet and simple, lacking fruit depth, but carried through by a spicy, perfumed oak character.

Brand, name and vintage (in rank order, alphabetical when equal)	Target price ($)*	1 Tasting score	2 Tasting notes
THE REST			
BANROCK STATION Cabernet Merlot 2001	8.25	15	Paler red colour; spicy cinnamon/clove/cedar and sweeter fruit aromas; juicy prune flavours, dusty tannins; simple palate with nutty oak finish.
BANROCK STATION Shiraz Cabernet 2001	8.25	15	Dark vibrant red colour; savoury, spicy currant and smoky stalks aromas, very oaky; palate dominated by dusty oak and sweetness, lacking fruit.
DE BORTOLI WINDY PEAK Cabernet Shiraz Merlot 2000	13.00	15	Dark ruby red colour with a brown edge; sweet stewed fruit aromas with spicy, oaky complexity; caramelised and stewed dark fruit flavours; soft, warm palate, simple finish.
FOX RIVER Cabernet Shiraz 2000	14.00	15	Purple/red colour; lifted aromas of eucalyptus/mint/menthol and spicy choc oak; lean palate with drying tannins and spicy oak finish.
GOUNDREY Cabernet Merlot 2000	15.00	15	Brick-red colour; distinctive musky, green/weedy/menthol nose; dark berry and cherry flavours; drying, chalky tannins on a simple palate.
JACOB'S CREEK Grenache Shiraz 2001	8.00	15	Garnet red colour; sweet/confectionery nose of stewed fruits; sweet but simple cherry and raspberry flavours; soft, light-bodied.
MIRANDA SOMERTON Shiraz Cabernet Merlot 2001	7.50	15	Pale cherry-red colour; light savoury nose with simple cherry aromas; plum, strawberry and currant flavours; warm and soft, chewy tannins; clean, light and fruity.
ORLANDO Trilogy Cabernet Sauvignon Cabernet Franc Merlot 2000	12.25	15	Bright ruby red colour; weedy/herbal nose with berry jam, mulberry and leather aromas; flavours of blackcurrant, berry and chocolate; 'greener' tannin flavours on the finish.
RICHMOND GROVE Cabernet Merlot 2000	11.45	15	Dark ruby red colour; attractive lifted minty green aromas; similar upfront flavours on the palate; green, chewy tannins, lean palate, dusty oak finish.
ST HALLETT Gamekeeper's Reserve Barossa 2001 **(C)**	12.85	15	Red colour with purple hues; reductive character to the nose; charry oak and sweet black fruit flavours; good weight, balanced tannins, a little green on the finish.
WIRRA WIRRA Vineyards Church Block Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz Merlot 2000	21.85	15	Dark brick-red colour; plum and cherry aromas in a savoury, spicy, peppery nose; rich, full palate with flavours of plum, cooked strawberries and spicy oak; simple, short finish.
WYNDHAM ESTATE Bin 888 Cabernet Merlot 2000	13.95	15	Brick-red colour; plum, redcurrant and leafy/mint aromas; savoury and charry oak flavours; dominating furry tannins, smoky finish with hints of green/stewed fruits.
WYNDHAM ESTATE Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz Ruby Cabernet 2001	8.00	15	Dark red colour; berry and cherry aromas with a green fruit/herbal/mint nose; strawberry jam and charry oak flavours on a soft, simple palate with good texture.
WYNNS Coonawarra Estate Cabernet Shiraz Merlot 1999	17.95	15	Dense, dark brick-red colour; earthy, dark fruit aromas with a spicy, lifted character from the oak; cedar and berry flavours; very dry tannins, full-bodied, older style.
ANDREW GARRETT Cabernet Merlot 1999	14.20	14.5	Terracotta colour showing some age; cedar/charry oak and leathery/tar aromas; licorice, prune and plum flavours on a drying palate, short finish.
ANGOVE'S Butterfly Ridge Shiraz Cabernet 2001	6.00	14.5	Deep brick-red colour; vegetal/stewed fruit nose; wild berry/green fruit flavours and slightly drying tannins; soft texture, simple, cordial-like sweetness.
ANGOVE'S Stonegate Cabernet Shiraz 2000	7.75	14.5	Brownish colour; dried, smoky, leathery and green bean aromas; flavours of stewed fruit, drying tannins; light-bodied and soft.
DE BORTOLI Sacred Hill Shiraz Cabernet 2001	5.45	14.5	Medium red/brown colour; green/vegetal and smoky, reduced characters to the nose; palate lacked fruit depth; light-bodied and soft.
HALF MILE CREEK Cabernet Merlot 2000	12.00	14.5	Dark red/brown colour; volatile character to the nose of dark chocolate, cherry and coffee aromas; plummy fruit and spice flavours on a hot, acid palate, sweet-and-sour.
HOUGHTON Cabernet Shiraz Merlot 2000	11.50	14.5	Dark brick-red colour; cherry/berry aromas with a herbal 'cooked greens' edge to the nose; a softer style, a little thin and short on flavour.
JACOB'S CREEK Shiraz Cabernet 2000	8.00	14.5	Mid-terracotta red colour; earthy/leathery and dark berry aromas with some cinnamon and 'green' notes; spicy plum and prune flavours; sweeter style, smoky finish.
JAMIESONS RUN Coonawarra Cabernet Shiraz Merlot 2000	14.00	14.5	Brick-red colour; herbal and mint aromas; darker, burnt fruitcake flavours, softer style.
RENMANO River Breeze Mataro Grenache Shiraz NV	4.55	14.5	Light garnet colour; savoury, dried fruit and burnt sugar aromas; light and simple palate, somewhat lacking in the middle.
WOLF BLASS Cabernet Merlot 2000	11.85	14.5	Medium red/purple colour; distinct onion/herbal and strong nutty oak aromas; oak-dominated style with astringent, lean tannins and moderate length.
YALUMBA OXFORD LANDING Cabernet Sauvignon & Shiraz 2000	8.50	14.5	Deep, dark red colour; subdued nose of baked berries, redcurrants and a menthol/green note; green fruit flavours with spicy oak and some sweetness; simple and short.
MAD FISH Western Australia Premium Red 2000 **(D)**	18.95	14	Ruby red colour with brown hues; savoury (soy sauce), earthy sulphide characters on the nose; flavours of plums, dark cherry and spice; short finish, softer style.
SALISBURY ESTATE Cabernet Merlot 2000	8.50	14	Cherry to brick-red colour; spicy, weedy aromas; soft yet quite complex palate with the fruit fading a little towards a short finish; a lighter style.
COCKATOO RIDGE Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot 2001	8.00	13.5	Dark red colour with a brown tinge; developed character to the nose with some oxidised, orange blossom aromas; leathery/smoky flavours; short finish.
McGUIGAN The Black Label (2000) **(B)**	10.00	13.5	Dark brick-red colour; oxidised characters on the nose, with tarry, spicy and apple seed aromas; some nutty and savoury flavours, but a particularly sweet palate.
MIXED EMOTIONS			
TATACHILLA PARTNERS Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz 2001	10.80	14.5–18	Mid-purple/red colour; spicy nose of red and blackcurrants and black olives; plum, berry and wild berry fruit flavours; palate of real weight and body, soft, silky tannins and warmth.
TYRRELL'S Long Flat Red 2001 **(E)**	8.00	14–18.5	Ruby red colour; savoury, berry jam and blackcurrant aromas; savoury palate of plums and chocolate; short, drying finish; food style.
SIR JAMES Cabernet Shiraz Merlot 1999	9.00	14–17	Dark red with some developed brown colour; spicy, savoury nose with a green note; earthy, gamy flavours; rich palate, good texture. Some tasters thought the fruit had dried out a little, others thought it contributed to complexity.

Notes on this table are overleaf on page 12.

* *We checked regular prices (not specials) at three retail outlets in Sydney in September 2002. These are the cheapest we found, rounded to the nearest five cents.*

(A) *Grape variety isn't stated on the label, and the manufacturer didn't disclose it in our survey. This wine is from Italy.*

(B) *Grape variety isn't stated on the label, and the manufacturer didn't disclose it in our survey.*

(C) *Grape varieties are grenache, tourigа, shiraz, mourvèdre, cabernet franc, malbec.*

(D) *Grape varieties are cabernet sauvignon and merlot.*

(E) *Grape varieties are cabernet sauvignon, shiraz and malbec.*

NOTES ON THE TABLE

1 Tasting score

The experts didn't know which wines they were tasting — what's known as a blind tasting — or the wine's prices. They could award up to 20 points to each, according to the international scoring system: 3 for appearance, 7 for nose and 10 for palate. (At wine shows, a wine that scores 18.5 points or more is awarded a gold medal, 17–18.4 points a silver and 15.5–16.9 points a bronze medal.)

The score printed in the table is the experts' consensus score reached after the tasting, when they discussed the wines and their individual scores — still without knowing what the wines were. It's usually the average of the five experts' scores. In three cases a wine received too wide a range of scores and no consensus could be reached. We called them *Mixed emotions* — they're listed at the end of the table.

2 Tasting notes

These are compiled from the experts' notes on the wine's colour, nose, palate and overall impression. Together with the scores they should give you a good indication of the wine's style, aroma and flavour. For an explanation of some of the tasting terms, see *Wine lingo*, right.

Wine lingo

If you're a novice to red wine appreciation, the explanations below should help you make sense of the terms experts use to describe a wine's aromas, flavours and mouth-feel.

- **Developed:** Showing signs of aging.
- **Earthy:** A taste sensation, not necessarily unpleasant, with mineral characteristics.
- **Finish:** Aftertaste.
- **Green:** Immature.
- **Hollow:** Starts well, finishes well, but lacks flavour in the middle part of your tongue.
- **Hot:** High in alcohol, giving a feeling of warmth.
- **Lifted:** Volatile acid, or wood tannins, can give wine a lift — it's not necessarily a fault.
- **Long:** A positive attribute, indicating the wine's flavour stays in your mouth for a while.
- **Oak/oaky:** A not unpleasant smell or taste derived from the oak barrels the wine's been stored in. Oak aging can also impart a smell or taste of vanilla beans, a so-called vanillin oak lift.
- **Oxidised:** Brownish colour and dullness of flavour and aroma are signs of excessive exposure to air: the wine's going off. However, slight oxidation can be beneficial. When a wine hasn't benefited from oxidation, it gets **reduced/reductive** characters to its nose and has little fruit aroma left.
- **Palate:** The way the wine tastes and feels in your mouth.
- **Structure:** The combination of a wine's acid, tannins, alcohol and body.
- **Sulphide:** Generic term for hydrogen sulphide, which releases a rotten-egg smell indicative of a winemaking fault (decaying yeast cells and yeast remnants).
- **Short:** Lacking in taste and structure.
- **Tannin (tannic acid):** Grape pips, skins and stalks (as well as wooden casks) naturally contain tannin, which acts as a preservative and imparts dryness to the wine's finish. Very dry tannic finishes are commonly described as **chalky, dusty, mouth-puckering** or **astringent**. Soft tannins can leave a **furry** sensation on the side of the tongue.
- **Tobacco/cigar box:** A smell found in cabernet sauvignon wines.
- **Volatile acids** are present in all wine and give it a lift — but ...
- **Volatile acidity (VA):** Spoilt by too much acetic acid, which turns the wine vinegary.

ANTHONY SAWES

THE EXPERTS

We're grateful to the five experts who judged the wines (clockwise from bottom left):

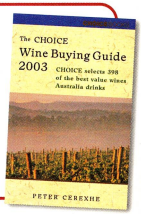
- Jim Chatto, winemaker, First Creek Wines and Chatto Wines.
- Matthew Parish, wine consultant, WineNet.
- Jason Hoy, wine retailer, Ultimo Wine Centre.
- Mark Richardson, winemaker, Tyrrell's.
- Sarah Pidgeon, winemaker, Wynns.

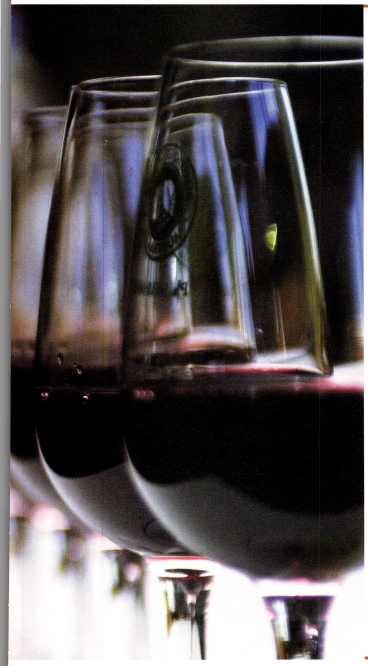
CORKED

If you like and regularly buy bottled wine, you've probably experienced cork taint (or TCA), a microbiological contamination of the cork which leaves the wine smelling and tasting musty, 'cardboardy' or like a hessian bag. A small percentage of corks is contaminated before they go into the bottle.

In our test only two of the 64 bottles we bought were corked. But if you're unlucky enough to get a corked one (or, based on our description of the taste and smell, think you might have one), return the (full) bottle to the shop and ask for a replacement, or ask for a new bottle in a restaurant. If it tastes the same, either the wine is faulty or the maker had a bad batch of corks.

Out in February: the **2003 CHOICE Wine Buying Guide** *again tests around 400 of the best-selling wines. New in this edition is a quick-reference table in each chapter listing wines with scores high enough to win in international competition.* ***Still just $30!***





Label insights

If there's just one grape variety listed on the label, the wine may still contain other varieties, but not more than 15%.

If two, three or up to five grape varieties are listed, similar but more complicated labelling rules apply. Most importantly, the grape varieties used in a particular blend must be listed in descending order of their contribution. So if there's more, say, merlot than shiraz in a blend, it must be called 'merlot shiraz', not the other way round.

Additives

All but two of the wines in the test have sulphur dioxide (220) added to them. **PETER LEHMANN Clancy's Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot and Cabernet Franc 2000** and **MAD FISH Western Australia Premium Red 2000** have potassium metabisulphite (224), which is in the same class of preservatives. They prevent bacterial growth and browning.

Many people with asthma are sensitive to sulphur dioxide. Because Australian red wines contain tannin, which acts as a natural preservative, they usually contain only around 40 ppm (parts per million) — much less than Australian white wines, which usually contain around 120–160 ppm.

Winemakers no longer have to list on the label all the preservatives, antioxidants, flavourings and colourings a wine contains, but from December 20, 2002, they'll have to list certain substances people could be allergic or sensitive to, if traces remain in the final product. The two preservatives mentioned above are included in the list of substances to be declared, if they're added in concentrations of 10 ppm or more. So you should still be able to see from the label whether the wine contains SO_2. Other substances that could be used in winemaking and must be declared include casein and potassium caseinate, egg white, milk and evaporated milk, isinglass (a fish product) and non-grape derived tannin (from chestnuts, for example).

Alcohol

The red wine blends tested contain 12–14% alcohol by volume; most have 13.5% or 13%.

The alcohol content is listed on the wine label. If you're ordering by the glass, swirl the wine around and up and down its sides. Droplets remaining on the side of the glass are an indication that the wine is high in alcohol.

ANTHONY SAMBROS

CHRISTMAS BOOZE BLUES

We don't want to be party-poopers, but here's some information to keep in mind this festive season if you're watching your weight.

While everyone knows Christmas treats such as mince pies and fruitcake are high in kilojoules, it's easy to forget the contribution Christmas drinks can make to our kilojoule intake. And most bottled alcohol labels won't tell you what it is — despite CHOICE's recommendation to the government, it's one of the foods/beverages exempt from otherwise mandatory nutrition labelling being introduced this month.

Of course, the nibblies that go with the drinks, such as potato chips and nuts, are also a kilojoule booster — and the more you drink, the more inclined you'll be to let your guard down and snack more.

Here's a comparison of approximately how many kilojoules or calories you'll get from some common drinks:

- 1 schooner (425 mL) of regular beer: 635 kJ/150 Cal.
- 1 middy or pot (285 mL) of regular beer: 425 kJ/100 Cal.
- 1 middy or pot of reduced-alcohol beer: 295 kJ/70 Cal.
- 1 pint (570 mL) of regular beer: 850 kJ/205 Cal.
- 1 small glass (150 mL) of red wine: 425 kJ/100 Cal.
- 1 small glass of white wine: 415 kJ/100 Cal.
- 1 small glass of sparkling white or red wine: 405 kJ/95 Cal.
- 1 gin and tonic (150 mL, including 30 mL nip): 435 kJ/105 Cal.
- 1 daiquiri (150 mL): 1040 kJ/250 Cal.
- 1 martini (150 mL): 1230 kJ/295 Cal.
- 1 bottle (250 mL) wine cooler: 550 kJ/130 Cal.

MILK UPDATE

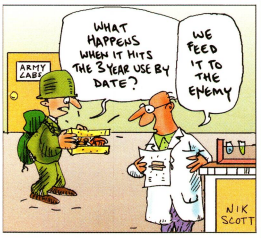
In the October issue, page 36, we said full-cream milk is the best choice for children once they've finished breastfeeding or infant formula, up to the age of five. While this has been the accepted advice for a long time, new dietary guidelines due to come into force next year are now recommending children over the age of two drink a reduced-fat milk (but not skim milk). Full-cream milk is still best for children under two.

This is partly due to the increasing numbers of obese children, but also to research showing that a diet high in saturated fat, even from early in life, can lead to heart disease. For more information on types of milk, see CHOICE, October 2002.

VINTAGE SANDWICHES

Fancy a sandwich? How about one that's up to three years old? The US army may be munching on just that in coming years, with the development of the 'non-spoiling' sandwich.

The fillings have humectants added to them, which absorb water and so limit the amount available in the filling for bacterial growth that leads to spoilage. They also stop water from the filling leaking into the bread and making it soggy.



And why should you care? Processed cheese and freeze-dried coffee were also developed by the army, so it might not be long till the sandwiches are on your supermarket shelf. While the army might be grateful for even vintage sandwiches in rough conditions, we're not sure regular consumers will take to them.

Don't trust the label

Only four of the 11 garden sprays we tested met all their labelled concentrations of active ingredients.

BURKE'S BACKYARD LORNA ROSE

If you have a garden, especially roses, it's quite likely you've used one of the garden sprays in our test. They claim to kill insects such as aphids, thrips and caterpillars, and/or protect roses from fungal diseases such as black spot, powdery mildew and rust (see *Common pests and diseases*, page 16, for details).

We looked at products containing one or more of the following active constituents:

- **Pyrethrum/pyrethrins**: Pyrethrum is a natural insecticide extracted from a species of chrysanthemum flower. It contains six compounds called pyrethrins that are closely related chemically and are used in a range of pesticide products.

  Pyrethrins in the concentrations used in garden sprays kill insects very quickly, but are thought to be relatively harmless for humans. However, they're also very toxic for fish, so make sure you cover your aquarium or fish pond before using a pyrethrum spray. Pyrethrins decompose rapidly in the environment.
- **Piperonyl butoxide (PBO)**: This is a chemical compound used in most pyrethrum products as a so-called synergist, enhancing the effect of the pyrethrins.
- **Triforine**: This is a synthetic fungicide.

WHAT WE TESTED

The labelled concentrations of active constituents of all agricultural chemicals have to be certified by the National Registration Authority (NRA). The manufacturer has to prove the product contains the labelled concentrations, which in a certified product such as the ones tested aren't supposed to vary by more than ±15%.

Certification also requires that the date of manufacture or batch number is shown on each bottle.

We bought a selection of home garden sprays (concentrates that require you to mix your own spray as well as ready-to-use sprays), and asked an experienced chemical laboratory to check whether they contained their labelled constituents.

Each sample was tested twice, and for some products we tested two samples as a check on our results.

WHAT WE FOUND

Of the 11 different sprays in our test, seven didn't meet at least one of their label claims. Some contained less than 10% of the certified concentration. While our test is only a snapshot (you may come across a number

IN A NUTSHELL

If you're after *a garden spray similar to the ones we tested, our results indicate that to have the best chance of getting an effective product:*

- **If you need a fungicide,** *look for an alcohol-based triforine product, rather than a water-based one.*
- **Avoid slow-release** *pyrethrin products.*
- **See What to look for,** *page 16, for details.*

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Our results indicate that to have the best chance of getting an effective product:

- **Buy alcohol-based triforine concentrates** (such as the **KENDON Triforine Rose Fungicide** and **YATES Rose Black Spot and Insect Killer**), rather than water-based concentrates or water-based ready-to-use sprays. You can identify alcohol-based products by the 'flammable liquid' warning sign on the label or bottle. There's evidence suggesting that triforine isn't stable in a water-based solution. The information sheet for Saprol, which is the highly concentrated 'raw' triforine product used in all domestic triforine sprays, recommends using the product within three hours of mixing it with water.
- **For pyrethrins, avoid slow-release** (micro-encapsulated, 'long-life' or 'time release') products.

THE A–Z OF GARDENING HINTS

The information and tips in Homemade treatments, *far right, and* Common pests and diseases, *right, are taken from the CHOICE book* A-Z of Gardening Hints, *a quick-reference guide for all those weekend gardeners who are frustrated and disappointed when plants don't do what they're supposed to do. It contains 500 simple tips and essential information about plants and gardening.*

It's only $20, and you can buy it on our website (go to www.choice.com.au and type 'gardening hints' in the search box), on page 24, or by calling us on 1800 069 552.

of similar products not included in our list), there are some patterns:

- Most water-based triforine products didn't meet their label claims, and in two of the **AUSGRO Sharp Shooter** products we found very big differences between samples of the same spray. On the other hand, both alcohol-based triforine products met their claimed concentrations.
- None of the slow-release (micro-encapsulated, 'time release' or 'long-life') samples met its claimed pyrethrin concentration, and only one its claimed PBO concentration.
- Of the other ready-to-use spray products, the **MULTICROP** failed its certification claims for pyrethrins. The **DEFENDER** and **YATES** sprays met theirs, though triforine was below the claim in both **YATES** samples, and PBO in one.

Also, although the label of the **AUSGRO Sharp Shooter** products includes a space for 'DOM' (date of manufacture) and 'Batch No', none of them had this information on the label. Only one bottle showed a date of manufacture on a separate sticker on the side of the bottle. While it's possible that all **AUSGRO** products carry such a sticker when leaving the warehouse (**AUSGRO** didn't provide information on this), the fact that only one of the tested samples still had one shows that stamping the label is the better solution.

To make sure you get what you're paying for, check *What to look for*, above, or try the recipes for homemade sprays (far right).

AUTHORITATIVE ACTION

We lodged a non-compliance report with the NRA, which has discussed our findings with the manufacturers concerned and asked them to voluntarily recall the relevant batches of triforine products. Pyrethrum products will be subject to further tests.

We'll keep you posted on any developments, and may retest some time in the new year.

Manufacturers' reactions

- **Ausgro** questioned whether the analytical method we used to measure pyrethrins is suitable for micro-encapsulated products. We've found no evidence that it isn't suitable, and Ausgro didn't respond to our request to provide such evidence, or a test method it thinks is more suitable.
- **Kendon** pointed out that our sample, while passing the certification requirement, was quite old: Sydney isn't one of its main markets and hasn't received new product for a while.
- **Multicrop** said it's going to follow up on our results to find out what went wrong. It pointed out that its factory, warehouse and lab were destroyed in a fire in February 2002, requiring production (including that of the samples in our test) to be outsourced.
- **Yates** said all its products are tested before being released for sale, and that it can't comment on our results, mainly because it doesn't know how our samples were stored at retail level. However, it didn't respond to our request for more information on how storage conditions affect the products. We think that if storage conditions are an issue, Yates needs to take this up with retailers.

COMMON PESTS AND DISEASES

PESTS

There's quite a number of crawly critters out to get your lovingly cared for garden plants. Some of the most common are:

- **Aphids:** These are small, soft-bodied, black, green or pink insects that gather in clusters underneath leaves, on flower buds and young shoots. They attack fruit trees, camellias, roses, chrysanthemums, bulbs, flowering annuals and vegetables.

  Apart from using a pyrethrum insecticide or a homemade spray (see right), you can try to hose aphids off, or squash them between your fingers.
- **Caterpillars:** They're particularly active in spring and summer. If plant leaves are being chewed, take immediate action to prevent defoliation.

  Apart from using a pyrethrum insecticide or homemade spray, try dusting caterpillars with flour or picking them off.
- **Thrips:** These are tiny flying insects just visible to the naked eye. They attack roses, fruit trees, some vegetable crops, gladioli and azaleas. Affected leaves take on a white, mottled appearance and petals become streaked.

Brand / product (in alphabetical order within groups)	Main solvent	Type	Active constituents labelled / measured (in g/L) Triforine	Pyrethrins	Piperonyl butoxide	Date of manufacture / batch no.	Manufacturer / distributor	Price ($)*
MET ALL LABEL CLAIMS								
DEFENDER Pyrethrum Insect Spray	Water	Ready-to-use	na / na	0.3 / 0.266	1.2 / 1.2	07/02	Scotts	7.25
KENDON Triforine Rose Fungicide	Alcohol	Concentrate	19 / 16.8	na / na	na / na	12/00	Kendon	12.65
MITRE 10 Natural Pyrethrum Insect Killer	Water	Ready-to-use	na / na	0.3 / 0.31	1.2 / 1.1	010306	Mitre10	6.95
YATES Rose Black Spot and Insect Killer	Alcohol	Concentrate	10.6 / 11.2	3.5 / 3.5	15.8 / 15.7	01/02	Arthur Yates	12.60
FAILED AT LEAST ONE LABEL CLAIM (FAILURES IN RED)								
AUSGRO Sharp Shooter Natural Pyrethrum Concentrate Time Release	Water	Concentrate	na / na	4 / <0.2	16 / 7.3	ns	Ausgro Technologies	10.85
AUSGRO Sharp Shooter Rose Black Spot & Natural Pyrethrum Concentrate Time Release **(A) (B)**	Water	Concentrate	10.6 / 29.5	3.5 / <0.5	15.8 / 7.2	ns	Ausgro Technologies	9.95
AUSGRO Sharp Shooter Rose Black Spot & Natural Pyrethrum Concentrate Time Release **(A) (B)**	Water	Concentrate	10.6 / <0.5	3.5 / <0.2	15.8 / 3.3	ns	Ausgro Technologies	9.95
AUSGRO Sharp Shooter Rose Black Spot and Timed Release Insect Spray **(A) (B)**	Water	Ready-to-use	0.6 / <0.04	0.2 / <0.03	0.9 / 1.1	01/02	Ausgro Technologies	8.75
AUSGRO Sharp Shooter Rose Black Spot and Timed Release Insect Spray **(A) (B)**	Water	Ready-to-use	0.6 / 0.63	0.2 / <0.03	0.9 / 0.4	ns	Ausgro Technologies	8.75
AUSGRO Sharp Shooter Triforine Rose Spray **(B)**	Water	Concentrate	20 / 3.3	na / na	na / na	ns	Ausgro Technologies	16.50
MULTICROP Pyrethrum Insect Spray	Water	Ready-to-use	na / na	0.3 / 0.228	1.2 / 0.94	04/02	Multicrop	7.00
MULTICROP Pyrethrum Long Life Insect Spray	Water	Ready-to-use	na / na	0.9 / 0.161	3 / 0.78	05/02	Multicrop	10.00
YATES Rose Gun Black Spot & Insect Killer **(A) (B)**	Water	Ready-to-use	0.6 / 0.24	0.2 / 0.171	0.9 / 0.51	09/01	Arthur Yates	4.00
YATES Rose Gun Black Spot & Insect Killer **(A) (B)**	Water	Ready-to-use	0.6 / 0.22	0.2 / 0.202	0.9 / 0.84	05/02	Arthur Yates	4.00

* *The price we paid in Sydney in September 2002, rounded to the nearest five cents. Some products also come in different sizes from those we bought.*

na Not applicable.

ns Not stated.

(A) *For each of these products we tested two samples.*

(B) *According to the manufacturer, this product will be discontinued in early 2003.*

Measured values in red indicate the product is in breach of its certification.

Thrips are very difficult to control, as they lay their eggs inside the plant tissue, and pupae and adults feed on unopened flower buds. Spraying with an insecticide is likely to work best.

DISEASES

Roses are especially prone to a range of fungal diseases. You can prevent them from spreading by removing affected leaves, but spraying with a fungicide may often be your only option for fighting them.

- **Black spot:** This disease is encouraged by humid conditions, and appears as random black or purple-brown spots on the upper surface of the leaves. Sometimes young stems are attacked as well.
- **Powdery mildew:** The first symptom is white or greyish-white spots on young leaves and stems. They spread rapidly to cover the plant until it looks as if it's been dusted with white powder.
- **Rust:** This shows as bright orange, powdery patches on the underside of leaves.

HOMEMADE TREATMENTS

If you want to avoid pesticides, here are some natural solutions that may do the trick:

- **Garlic:** Soak six peeled garlic cloves in a litre of water for several days and then blend. This spray should deter caterpillars, ants, aphids and cabbage worms.
- **Onions:** Chop one large onion into a litre of water and blend. This spray should deter red spider mites and aphids.
- **Soap:** Pure laundry soap lathered up in water should kill most pests.

SIMON ARMITAGE

The sprays and concentrates we tested. See **What to look for,** *above left, for how to get what you pay for.*

Temptation time

At Christmas you might be tempted to spend more than you can afford on your credit card. It's always worth thinking ahead about how you'll manage to pay the bill in the New Year before you go on your gift-buying splurge.

One thing to bear in mind is that using the wrong type of credit card could make Christmas even more expensive than it needs to be. There are only two types of card to choose from:

- If you don't pay off your entire balance and usually pay interest, make sure you have a card with the lowest possible interest rate.
- If you always pay your entire balance within the interest-free period, you need a card with a high number of interest-free days plus low fees.

Beware of cards offering a low interest rate for an introductory period. Always check the rate the card will revert to at the end of that honeymoon — it may be substantially higher than other available cards. Resist the initial discount rate and think about your long-term ability to keep up with payments.

For more information about choosing the right credit card, go to www.choice.com.au and type 'choose the right credit card' in the search box. We have a comprehensive article on choosing the best card for your needs and a 'compare-a-card' tool that includes data (updated daily) on over 230 cards.

The table below lists the best low-interest and interest-free-days cards as at October 28, 2002.

BEST CREDIT CARDS*

Card provider (in order of interest rate)	Card name**	Interest rate (%)	Annual fee ($)	Interest-free days	Reward program
If you'll have a carry-over balance and will have to pay interest					
BANKWEST	BankWest Lite Mastercard	9.99	36	10	
BANK SA	Starts Low Stays Low MasterCard	10.99	39	25	
ST GEORGE BANK	Starts Low Stays Low MasterCard	10.99	59	25	
ANZ BANK	ANZ 1st (Low Interest Visa)	11.75	26	0	
BENDIGO BANK	Visa No Free Days	12.90	30 **(A)**	0	✓
If you always pay your entire balance within the interest-free period **(B)**					
HERITAGE BS	Heritage Visa Classic	14.95	24	25	✓
BANK OF QUEENSLAND	Bankcard Free Days	15.50	25	25	✓
BANK OF QUEENSLAND	Mastercard Free Days	15.50	25	25	✓
BANK OF QUEENSLAND	Visa Free Days	15.50	25	25	✓
WOOLWORTHS EZY BANKING	Woolworths Ezy Mastercard	15.75	24	25	✓
GE CAPITAL CONSUMER FINANCE	OneLink MasterCard	16.20	18	25	✓

BS *Building society.*

* *Cards chosen are available in at least two states.*

** *Cards shown exclude those with an introductory interest rate (see above for details).*

(A) *Optional, for reward program.*

(B) *Based on the lowest fees available, as they all have 25 interest-free days.*

COMPLAINTS SERVICES LINKED

By calling 1300 78 08 08 you can now contact four financial complaints services:

- The Australian Banking Industry Ombudsman (ABIO) for help if you have a dispute with your bank.
- The Credit Union Dispute Resolution Centre (CUDRC) if you've an unresolved complaint against a credit union that is a member of the scheme.
- Insurance Enquiries and Complaints (IEC), which gives advice and help if you have a problem with a general insurance claim.
- Financial Industry Complaints Service (FICS), which looks after complaints regarding life insurance and investments, including complaints about fund managers, financial advisers and securities advisers (brokers).

VANESSA MARSHALL

Stricter rules on credit card limits

A new law protecting financially vulnerable consumers came into effect last month in the ACT. It's designed to stop financial institutions from offering and granting credit card limit increases without checking a cardholder's financial capacity to repay.

The total limit on bank-issued credit cards has reached $60.5 billion, according to Reserve Bank figures from June this year — about double the amount it was four years ago. The average limit is $6308 and the average amount owing $2192.

The new law forces financial institutions to make a detailed assessment of the borrower's financial capacity, including income, expenses and current repayments, before issuing a new credit card or raising the limit on an existing one. We hope other states adopt a similar law in the near future.

SMOKED SALMON

We asked some top foodies to taste 16 brands and tell you which they'd serve for Christmas.

IN A NUTSHELL

- **The good news:** *Our tests found no major bacterial problems with smoked salmon (unless you're pregnant and need to worry about listeria). But with vacuum-packed salmon look for a use-by date that's a long way off — bacteria levels can get high towards the end of the shelf life and affect the salmon's quality.*
- **The bad news:** *Our expert tasters only found one brand of vacuum-packed smoked salmon they'd really want to serve to their guests, plus three others they'd consider as a second choice (see* Experts' choice, *page 20).*

Ever stood in the supermarket and wondered whether the smoked salmon on offer would make or break your party plans?

Smoked salmon can be a hit and miss affair — it's not till you open your little package of gold that you discover whether you've got perfect slices of heaven or fishy-smelling mush. And you might also worry about whether your signature smoked-salmon appetiser could give your guests a better peek at your new bathroom than they might have bargained for.

TASTES LIKE HEAVEN

To help answer these questions, we asked Greg Doyle (restaurateur and chef, Pier Restaurant, Sydney), Simon Johnson (providore, Simon Johnson Fine Foods), and Neil Pass (head chef, bel mondo, Sydney) to put their skills to the test and tell you which vacuum-packed smoked salmon they'd serve their guests.

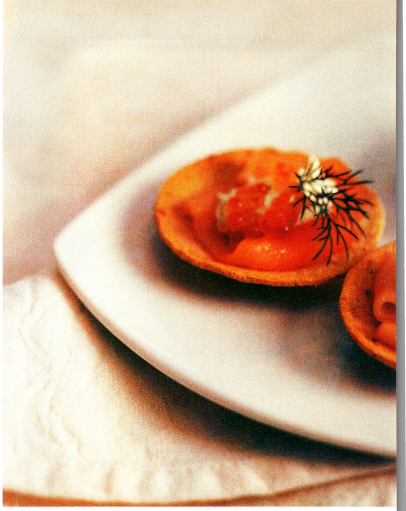
We also set the lab to work testing for bacteria and looking at the microbiological quality of 16 vacuum-packed smoked salmons and another 13 samples of the unpackaged, per-kilo kind.

The foodies were unequivocal — on the day, one brand of smoked salmon stood out well above the rest (see *Experts' choice*, page 20). Three others were definitely worth considering, but sadly our tasters were generally unimpressed with the remainder on offer.

ALL IN THE BLOODLINE

One interesting point the experts all felt strongly about was 'bloodline' — our taste panel's comments frequently refer to it (see the table, page 23). This is an area of flesh along the spine of the fish, which you often see as a discoloured strip of varying width.

The panel found this one of the most significant factors affecting their taste preferences — the bloodline can give an unpleasant taste, so samples with a large one generally weren't rated very well. Look out for a small or no bloodline when you're buying.



How it's made

Smoked salmon can be made from either frozen or fresh salmon — it depends on the producer. The fish is defrosted first if necessary, filleted and then salted or brined and left to cure.

There are two methods of smoking, of which **cold smoking** is the most common. The fillets are smoked using wood smoke, but the temperature is kept low so as not to cook them. Some salmon is **hot smoked**, where a higher temperature is used to cook the fish and produce a slightly different taste.

Once they're smoked, the fillets are pin-boned and skinned and then usually blast-frozen before slicing and vacuum packing. Because of this freezing process, many packets carry a warning that you shouldn't refreeze any uneaten salmon.

EXPERTS' CHOICE

Southern Ocean Smoked Sliced Salmon $5.00 per 100 g
(Call The New Zealand King Salmon Co, +64 3 548 5714, for distribution information.)

ALSO GOOD (in alphabetical order)

Golden Bay Smoked Salmon $4.50 per 100 g
(The New Zealand King Salmon Co, +64 3 548 5714.)

Springs Smoked Salmon $6.15 per 100 g
(Springs Smoked Seafood, (08) 8398 2533.)

Windsor Smoke House Tasmanian Salmon $5.95 per 100 g
(Windsor Smokehouse, (02) 4577 3122.)

ANTHONY SAMSTAG

Manufacturers should preferably trim most of the bloodline from the product, but according to the expert panel, doing this properly can lose as much as 10–15% of the weight of the fish, which of course cuts into profits.

See *Taste test*, page 22, for more on what's likely to affect the taste.

MICRO MEASURES

Happily, most of the salmon was OK in bacterial terms. A few contained *Listeria monocytogenes*, but that's not really big news. Pregnant women and anyone whose immune system isn't up to scratch have long been advised to steer clear of foods like smoked salmon as well as various other foods, such as soft cheeses. Listeria is killed by thorough cooking, but it can grow at refrigerator temperatures and is especially a problem in uncooked, chilled foods.

As for other bugs that could make you sick, there were two samples, one of which was unpackaged, with low levels of staphylococcus (fortunately still too low to do any damage), which means poor hygiene at some point during handling. One other sample contained high levels of *E coli*, which can make you sick and indicates poor handling. For more on the bacteria we found, see the notes with the table, page 22.

UTE MEGMANN

Chemical residues in farmed salmon?

There's been a lot of publicity in Europe and North America about worrying levels of residues like dioxins and PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) in farmed salmon. It's thought these contaminants find their way into the salmon from ocean pollution, and also because the feed that's used comes from fish caught in polluted waters.

The Australian National Residue Survey (NRS) most recently looked at farmed salmon in its 2000-2001 report. Out of 50 samples tested, it found none had detectable residues of organochlorines (including PCBs) or other insecticides and antimicrobials. It also checked for heavy metal contamination and could find no samples with cadmium or lead, though all 50 had small amounts of mercury, selenium, zinc and copper that were below the set limits. An NRS study of limited size has also found no problem with dioxins in Australian salmon.

Australian and New Zealand farmers claim there are two reasons their products aren't affected by these problems. First, because of the relatively clean environments in which the farms are located. And second, because the fish meal used in their feed is sourced mainly from South American waters off the coast of Chile and Peru, where the industry claims studies have shown the pollution levels are lower than in the northern waters where the fish meal used in Europe and North America is sourced.

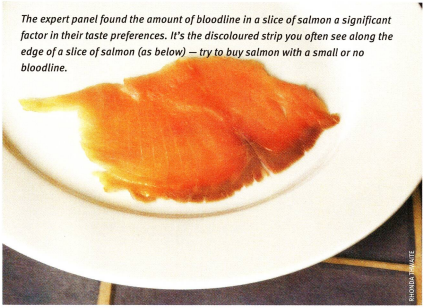
We tested for bugs right at the end of the salmons' use-by dates — and our results show that while some samples were still doing well, others had come to the end of their shelf life. The overall level of spoilage bacteria was in some cases reaching levels where you'd definitely start to notice.

The difficulty with bacteria levels and smoked salmon is that not only do they depend on how well it's been processed by the manufacturer, the way it's handled throughout the distribution and storage chain can have a big impact on the quality when you buy it. If the high levels of bacteria we found in some samples are due to this, manufacturers should take it up with their distribution networks.

Interestingly, we didn't find that the unpackaged kind of smoked salmon was any more risky than vacuum-packed. In fact, in this instance it was generally better. This could have been because it was tested on the day of purchase, and in most cases would have been fresher than the packed kind by the end of their use-bys.

The best advice seems to be to buy from a retailer you trust that has a good turnover. With packaged salmon, always buy with the longest possible use-by date so the bacteria have had less chance to multiply. And, of course, all the old advice applies — get it home fast and keep it refrigerated.

The expert panel found the amount of bloodline in a slice of salmon a significant factor in their taste preferences. It's the discoloured strip you often see along the edge of a slice of salmon (as below) — try to buy salmon with a small or no bloodline.


RHONDA TAUKITE

'NATURAL' COLOUR?

Wild salmon get their colour from carotene pigments in some of the animals in their natural diet (krill and other crustaceans). As salmon themselves can't make these pigments, farmed salmon have them added to their food to give the final product its pinky-orange colour.

UTE WEGMANN

Salmon farming and the environment

You might have read about environmental issues surrounding salmon farming, but most of the information comes from Europe and North America. Australian and New Zealand producers seem to have some distinct environmental advantages over imports.

Interactions with wild fish populations are a concern in the northern hemisphere. It's thought that farm escapees could breed with wild stocks and cause significant changes in the wild gene pool. However, there are no true 'wild' salmon in Australia or New Zealand. Atlantic salmon are farmed in Australia and king salmon in New Zealand; neither is native to these countries. 'Wild' stocks have been introduced and are reliant on restocking to keep their numbers up.

The introduction of **genetically modified salmon** is also of concern in Europe and North America, for the same reasons — escapees breeding with wild salmon could result in modified genes being introduced to the wild population. No GM salmon are grown here.

Pollution. Environmentalists claim the waste produced by salmon farms (fish waste and uneaten feed) makes for poor water quality. However, the industry here and in New Zealand believes its practices (allowing areas to lie fallow, using deep, high-water-flow environments) minimise impacts and that it's in its interests to keep water quality high and feed waste low.

Disease. A major concern in Europe and North America is the high rate of disease (which might be transferred to wild populations) and the residues that remain in the fish after treating these diseases. Australia and New Zealand are free from most of the serious diseases that affect salmon in other countries. Plus, our salmon farmers say they don't use antibiotics as growth promotors and so there's no concern about antibiotic-resistant bacteria being encouraged.

Wild fish for feed. Farmed salmon are fed fish meal and oils that come from commercially caught fish. There's a concern that this increases rather than decreases the pressure on fish stocks, as it uses more fish protein in the feed than the salmon produce. The local industry says fish meal used in Australia and New Zealand comes largely from South American fisheries that target fish not usually eaten by people, though there's debate as to whether these species are overfished or not. Some waste fish from other fish processing is also used.

* *Samples tested for bacteria content weren't the same batch as those in the taste test — see right for details.*

** *This is the price we paid in September 2002 at delis and supermarkets. Prices can vary greatly from retailer to retailer.*

(A) *One sample had high levels of* E coli *and* pseudomonas *and a much higher total bacteria count than the other four OK samples. The manufacturer said this packet must have been damaged.*

(B) *The manufacturers that responded to our results of high total bacteria levels said they were higher than their own quality checks would predict, which would indicate a problem in the distribution chain.*

(C) *Made in SA from Tasmanian salmon.*

1 Taste test

We asked three leading foodies (see *Tastes like heaven*, page 19, and the photo, above right) to taste the packaged smoked salmon. They considered aspects such as colour, aroma, texture and flavour. Their overall assessment forms the basis of our scoring.

- The experts' choice — this is what they'd serve to their guests.
- These smoked salmons stood out from the rest.
- The experts weren't impressed with these.

It should be noted that salmon is a highly variable product and natural genetic variations in the fat content, for example, can cause variations in the smoke and salt uptake. The colour, flavour and 'mouth feel' can also vary from salmon to salmon — even when they're fed on exactly the same diet. Our taste test is a snapshot of what our expert panel thought of the samples on the day — though they were unanimous in their judgments. Farmers' and distributors' quality processes should help standardise factors that can be controlled, but genetic differences aren't among these.

For the taste test we tried to get samples for tasting with similar use-by dates (they approximately covered a three-week period). Although a few samples had a slightly longer shelf-life left than others, they weren't rated any higher.

2 Bacterial problems at end of use-by date

We tested all the brands at the end of their use-by date, so you might expect they wouldn't be at their best. However, some were much better than others. In this column we note any result that was worse than we'd expect for something at the end of its use-by period. We measured:

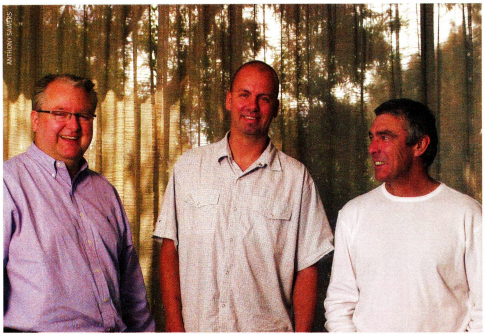
Total number of bacteria ('total plate count'): One million bacteria per gram is approaching the end of the salmon's shelf life; 10 million is the end of its useful shelf life. We've commented on any samples that exceeded this level.

Lactobacillus and pseudomonas bacteria: Both are a measure of quality and shelf life, and can be responsible for sliminess and 'off' odours. We've noted any samples that were particularly high.

E coli can make you sick and indicates poor handling: we found it in one sample — see footnote (A).

Staphylococci: At *any* level this indicates poor handling practices — coughing, sneezing or touching food when you've got an open wound. We found two samples (one unpackaged) with levels fortunately still too low to make you sick.

Listeria monocytogenes: We found this in a few samples. It's well-known that pregnant women and people with poor immune systems shouldn't eat smoked salmon (see *Micro measures*, page 20) — *L monocytogenes* can cause miscarriages. It doesn't affect healthy non-pregnant adults.



Thanks to our tasters: Simon Johnson (left), Neil Pass (centre) and Greg Doyle.

NUTRITION FACTS

- *Smoked salmon is a good source of important highly unsaturated omega-3 fats – the kind we all need more of for heart and blood health.*
- *It's also quite high in sodium: 50 grams give an adult a fair proportion of the upper recommended daily limit (typically as much as one third).*

Packaged salmon brand (in order of taste test rating, alphabetical when equal)	1 Taste test rating	Tasting notes	2 Any bacterial problems at end of use-by date?*	Origin	Price paid per 100 g ($)**
SOUTHERN OCEAN Smoked Sliced Salmon	◡ ◡ ◡	Good 'natural' colour, small bloodline; smoky aroma; good texture; well-balanced, soft, pleasant flavour.	One sample had some bacterial problems, but four others were OK. **(A)**	New Zealand	5.00
GOLDEN BAY Smoked Salmon	◡ ◡	Pale colour, small bloodline; pleasant fishy aroma; slightly soft, some bones.	OK	New Zealand	4.50
SPRINGS Smoked Salmon	◡ ◡	'Natural' colour, very little bloodline; mild smoky aroma; good texture; pleasant, mild, smoky flavour.	OK	South Australia **(C)**	6.15
WINDSOR SMOKE HOUSE Tasmanian Salmon	◡ ◡	Bright colour, medium bloodline; firm texture; pleasant fishy and smoky aroma.	Lactobacillus level could give it off odours.	Tasmania	5.95
ABEL TASMAN Premium Quality Tasmanian Smoked Salmon	◡	Pale colour, dark bloodline; flavour disliked by tasters.	Total number of bacteria particularly high and the lactobacillus level could give it off odours. **(B)**	Tasmania	4.60
AQUATAS Tasmanian Atlantic Salmon	◡	Pale colour, medium bloodline; strong aroma; mushy texture; nondescript flavour.	Total number of bacteria particularly high and the lactobacillus level could give it off odours. **(B)**	Tasmania	5.20
BRUNY ISLAND Premium Smoked Salmon	◡	Pale colour, moderate bloodline; stale aroma; flavour disliked by tasters.	Total number of bacteria particularly high and the lactobacillus level could give it off odours. Listeria monocytogenes detected. **(B)**	Tasmania	7.00
GOLD STAR Tasmanian Smoked Salmon	◡	Dark colour, some bloodstains; fishy aroma; bitter aftertaste.	Lactobacillus level could give it off odours.	Tasmania	6.00
MOHR Classic Smoked Tasmanian Salmon	◡	Bright colour, large bloodline; heavily fishy aroma; breaks up easily.	Lactobacillus level could give it off odours and a low level of staphylococcus suggests poor handling or damage, though it's below levels that could make you sick.	Tasmania	5.60
NORTAS Tasmanian Supreme Smoked Salmon	◡	Pale colour, large bloodline; light fishy aroma; mushy texture; strong fishy flavour.	Lactobacillus level could give it off odours. Listeria monocytogenes detected.	Tasmania	4.00
NORTAS Wood Smoked Tasmanian Salmon	◡	Pale colour, large bloodline; fishy aroma; fleshy texture; fishy, smoky flavour.	Lactobacillus level could give it off odours. Listeria monocytogenes detected.	Tasmania	3.95
ROYAL LINE Smoked Salmon	◡	Pale colour, very small bloodline; heavy smoky aroma; very smoky, salty flavour.	Lactobacillus level could give it off odours.	Denmark	4.00
ROYAL TASMANIAN Sliced Smoked Salmon	◡	Bloodline large in some slices; light smoky aroma; some bones.	OK	Tasmania	5.90
SUPERIOR GOLD Smoked Salmon	◡	Very pale colour, bloodline in parts; heavily smoked character.	OK	Denmark	5.10
TASMANIAN SMOKEHOUSE Sliced Smoked Salmon	◡	Pale colour, large bloodline; light aroma; mushy texture; flavour disliked by tasters.	OK	Tasmania	4.75
YUMI'S Smoked Tasmanian Salmon	◡	Bloodline large in some slices; fishy aroma.	Total number of bacteria particularly high and the lactobacillus level could give it off odours. **(B)**	Tasmania	6.10

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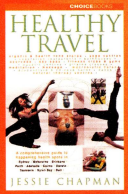

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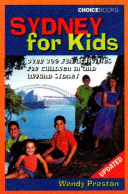

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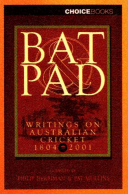

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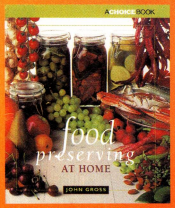

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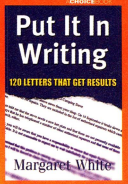

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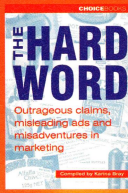

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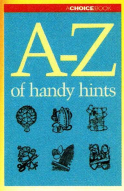

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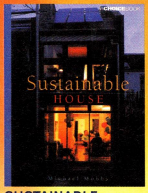

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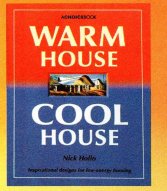

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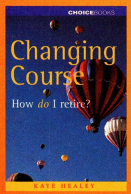

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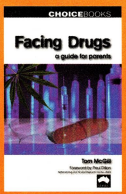

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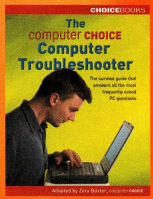
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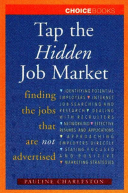

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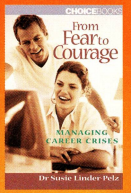

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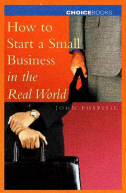

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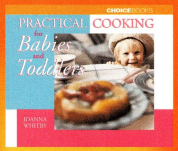

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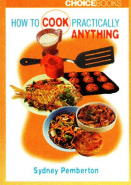

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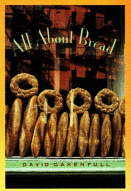

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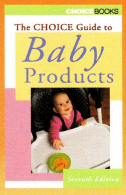

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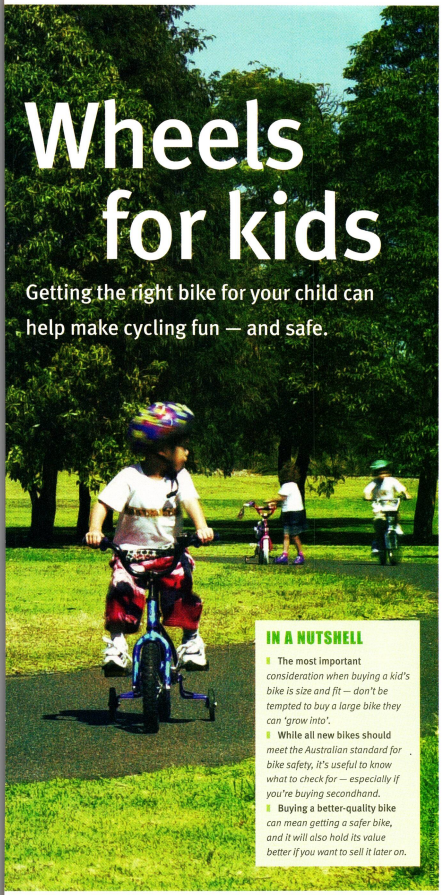
Wheels for kids

Getting the right bike for your child can help make cycling fun — and safe.



IN A NUTSHELL

- **The most important** *consideration when buying a kid's bike is size and fit — don't be tempted to buy a large bike they can 'grow into'.*
- **While all new bikes should** *meet the Australian standard for bike safety, it's useful to know what to check for — especially if you're buying secondhand.*
- **Buying a better-quality bike** *can mean getting a safer bike, and it will also hold its value better if you want to sell it later on.*

Getting their first bike is a big moment in many a child's life. A safe and comfortable bike, along with lessons in cycling safety, can mean opening up a whole new world of fun, freedom and independence. It's a comfort that new bikes sold in Australia must conform to the relevant Australian standard (AS/NZS 1927:1998 Pedal bicycles — Safety requirements) to ensure they're safe and of good quality. But choosing a bike that suits your child and his or her needs is equally important.

This article provides a checklist of things to consider when buying a new or secondhand bike for your child, with the aim of creating safe and fun times ahead.

SIZE AND FIT

The most important consideration is size. While it's tempting to get a larger bike that your child can grow into, until they do it's dangerous because they won't be able to control it properly, and it won't be much fun to ride. Buying a bike to fit means taking your child with you to the bike shop, and while it may spoil an intended surprise, a right-sized bike will be appreciated more.

A bike is the right size when your child can:

- Sit on the saddle and rest the balls of both feet on the ground.
- Straddle the top bar with about 3-5 cm clearance and with both feet flat on the ground.
- Reach the handlebars with a slight bend in the arms when sitting on the seat. If there are handbrakes, your child should be able to grasp them and apply enough pressure to stop the bike.

As your child grows, you can raise the seat post and handlebar stem.

BRAKES

The Australian standard requires that children's bikes should have at least two braking systems, of which one must be a back-pedal brake (where brakes are activated when you pedal backwards). In any case, pedal brakes are usually recommended for beginners, especially very young children who don't have the hand and arm strength to operate handbrakes safely. There's usually a handbrake for the front wheel too — check its quality and make sure it's not a flimsy plastic lever that bends when squeezed.

WHEELS

Aluminium rims provide a better braking surface than shiny chrome-plated steel rims, and are therefore safer. Our sister organisation in the US tested both types, and braking distance with steel wheels was five

times greater than with aluminium ones. If you're not sure how to tell the difference, take a magnet with you (it won't stick to aluminium).

It's better not to get a bike with a quick-release front wheel for a child, because it's not really necessary and could be dangerous if not installed correctly.

TRAINING WHEELS

While some people reckon you're better off learning without them, training wheels can be invaluable while your child is learning to balance. Start with them on the ground, and gradually raise them as your child gains confidence.

CHAIN GUARD

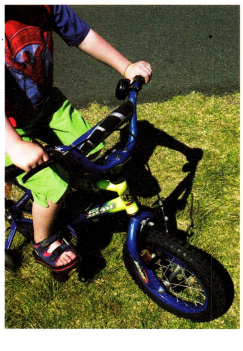
Children's bikes should have a guard that encloses the chain wheel and the upper run of the chain, and you should only be able to remove it with a tool. In one variety store we visited, only half the kids' bikes had the guard, so if you notice the bike doesn't have one, insist it's put on (or don't buy the bike).

GEARS

Gearing depends a lot on how good a cyclist your child is and the terrain where they'll ride. For young beginners, a bike without gears is usually recommended, whereas for more experienced riders a few gears might be useful to make going up hills easier. The main thing is to listen to your child — don't give them a bike more complicated than they feel confident with.

PEDALS AND HANDLEBARS

There should be a tread on both surfaces of the pedal, and if it's mean enough to necessitate wearing shoes, so much the better!



The ends of the handlebars should be covered so raw metal doesn't protrude, and the handgrips should be secure.

SAFETY GEAR

Safety accessories required by the Australian standard are a bell or horn, so your child can alert pedestrians and other cyclists; and front, rear, pedal and spoke-mounted reflectors. If your child is going to be riding at night — which generally isn't recommended — they'll also need lights.

An Australian Standards-approved helmet is an essential component of the bicycle package. Don't even consider giving your child a bike to ride without a helmet. It's important that it fits properly and your child likes it. If it doesn't fit well, it's next to useless in an accident, and if your child doesn't like it, they won't wear it. A helmet isn't a suitable surprise present — your child needs to try it on for size and style before you buy it.

A good helmet:

- Fits snugly but comfortably on your head. You can use foam pads provided with the helmet to fine-tune the fit.
- Sits firmly about 1–1.5 cm above the eyebrows. You shouldn't be able to move it forwards, backwards or sideways.
- Feels comfortable to wear — not too hot or heavy.
- Allows good visibility all round — a sun visor can help keep the sun out of your eyes.
- Is a bright colour so it's more easily seen.
- Is easy to do up and undo, and has straps that are easy to adjust.

INSTRUCTIONS AND LABELLING

The Australian standard for bikes requires certain instructions, labels and warnings be included with the bike when applicable. If you're buying secondhand, some of them will be missing, but it's useful to know what is expected.

- All bikes should come with use and maintenance instructions.
- Bikes styled to *look like* off-road or stunt bikes (such as 'BMX' or 'mountain' bikes) but which aren't suited to such use should carry a warning label. Of course if you want a bike that suits these purposes, make sure it's the real McCoy.
- If the bike is only partially assembled, simple, clear and adequate instructions for putting the pieces together, as well as which tools should be used, should be included.
- Assembled bikes with misaligned handlebars and/or pedals removed (for fitting in a box, say) should have a label warning that adjustment is required and/or pedals need to be attached.
- The bike should carry a permanent marking with the name and address in Australia of its manufacturer, importer or distributor, and an identification number.

ASSEMBLY

Bikes that you put together yourself need some technical expertise if it's to be done correctly and safely. For safety's sake, the Australian standard recommends you have the bike assembled by a qualified bicycle mechanic. Bikes that come fully assembled should meet the standard for assembly — look for a checklist or certificate that confirms this.

RIDING ON THE FOOTPATH

While the rules for teens and adults riding on the footpath vary from state to state, children under 12 are allowed to ride on the footpath in all states. Cyclists must give way to pedestrians, keep to the left, and if there's a sign saying no cycling (near shopping areas, for example) get off the bike and push it.

When we tested adult bikes (CHOICE, June 2001), we found several of them not properly assembled — with, for example, loose handlebars or headset (the bearing assembly that connects the front fork to the frame). So check that things like handlebars, brake pads and pedals aren't loose and that the wheels spin true (look at the spinning wheel from the front with the bike upside-down).

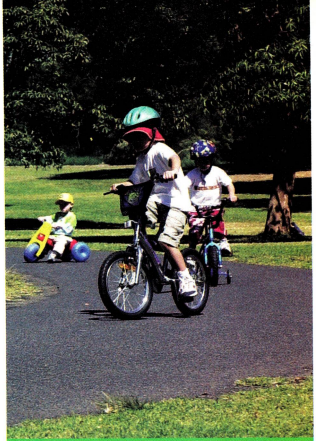
WHERE TO SHOP

Try a specialty bike shop first, and get your child fitted with the right-size bike. Then if you want to go to a department store or buy a secondhand bike, at least you'll know what to look for. A test ride will ensure the bike is comfortable to ride, something a bike shop will let (and even recommend) you do, but not a department or variety store.

PRICE

A reasonably good-quality bike with 12 inch wheels plus training wheels for a three- to five-year-old is likely to cost around $140 to $200, while a larger (20 inch or 24 inch) bike for a child up to 12 can cost upwards of $240.

If money is an issue, you could consider a secondhand bike. In theory, you should be able to get a very good-quality used bike for the same price as or less than a cheap, not-so-good-quality new bike. While kids would probably prefer the shiny new bike, no matter how poor its quality, you could compensate for the 'usedness' of the bike by allowing them to decorate it as they please with paint or stickers — something their friend with the new bike might not be allowed to do.



MORE INFORMATION

- For more on **choosing a bicycle helmet**, see our test article in CHOICE, May 2000, or go to our website (www.choice.com.au) and type 'helmets' in the search box.
- For more on **assembly advice** and **choosing a bike for adults**, see CHOICE, June 2001, or type 'bicycles' in the search box on our website.

Biking for babies

When your child's not quite old enough to ride a bike, you can still take them with you when you ride. Your three main options are a trailer, a child seat or a trailer bike (also called a half-bike trailer).

- A **trailer** is probably the safest way to carry a very young child, although it's not without risks. For one, it's a pretty rough ride, and your baby's brain will get quite a rattling. Experts say you shouldn't take a baby under 12 months old in a trailer. In any case, you'd be hard-pressed to find a helmet that fits, and you wouldn't consider carrying a child without a helmet, would you?

Depending on the model, a trailer can also tip over quite easily (if one wheel goes over a rock or kerb, or you turn too sharply, for example). When you're choosing a trailer, get one with rollbar protection, a five-point harness and a hitch that will allow the trailer to stay upright even if the bike tips over.

Also consider ventilation (it can get pretty hot in there); protection from the elements (rain and wind); protection from bottom bumps; ease of attaching; and ease of storage and transportation (a fold-up model with removable wheels will take up less space in your home and car).

- A **child seat** can be mounted on the front or back of your bike. Your child needs to be strong enough to wear a helmet and still keep their head upright (over 12 months). The seat should have guards so their hands and feet can't get caught in the spokes.

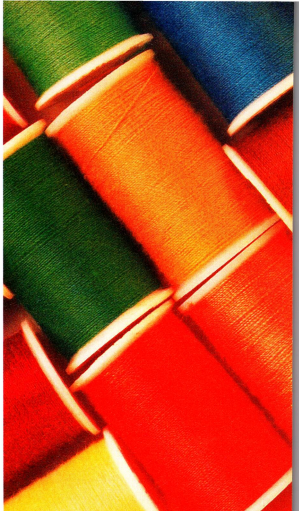
As with trailers, it's a pretty bumpy ride. When you go over bumps, you use your legs and saddle to absorb some of the shock, but the baby will feel every jolt.

The main problem with a child seat is the destabilising effect it has on the bike: one wriggle and the bike goes careening sideways or, worse, tips over. A large number of accidents happen when the child is sitting in the seat while the bike is leaning against a wall or on its stand before you get on — putting your child in a child seat is really a two-person job.

- A **half-bike trailer** has a seat, handlebars, pedals and a rear wheel and attaches to your bike like a trailer. It's the ideal option if your child is old enough to keep their balance and do a little pedalling, but not strong enough to cycle a long way on their own. And with a little luck, it will make your job easier on the uphills!

IN STITCHES

Beginner or experienced sewer? These machines suit both.


COMSTOCK

IN A NUTSHELL

While all the machines *in our test performed well on straightforward stitches and fabric, there were significant differences between the best and worst performers on more adventurous stitch and fabric options.*

There were also *noticeable differences in ease of use between best and worst models — and that's a very important factor for novice sewers.*

It's been a while since we tested sewing machines, but judging by the number of requests for a test in our database, there are some keen sewers among CHOICE subscribers.

This test covers seven electronic or computerised sewing machines, with price tags around $1000. These are a step up from a basic machine, and can be used for all domestic jobs. They're suitable for beginners but will also cater for the more experienced home sewer wanting a greater choice of stitches, as well as the ability to do embroidery, buttonholing and appliqué.

While making your own clothes generally isn't much cheaper these days, it can still be worthwhile if you want to replicate an expensive outfit or personalise your clothes with special embroidery, say.

WELL STITCHED UP

A sewer with 30 years' sewing and teaching experience put the machines through their paces. The machines were tested for general home use, and on functions that were common to all machines. We looked at both sewing performance and ease of use.

A good machine will produce even, tight stitches without puckering. We assessed the stitches on a variety of fabrics: stretch (polar fleece, lycra and stretch lace), light (chiffon, organza, silk satin and cotton voile), medium (corduroy and dress linen), heavy (denim and wool blanketing) and pile (velvet and polar fleece). All the machines performed well on basic straight stitch and zig-zag stitch except the **BROTHER**, whose zig-zag wasn't quite up to the standard of the others.

Differences were more obvious when comparing the more intricate stitches:

- The **SINGER** produced comparably worse stretch stitch, appliqué and computer stitches than the other models.
- Overall the **BERNINA** and **JANOME** produced the best stitches, with the **BERNINA** better for buttonholing.

WHAT TO BUY

BERNINA Activa 125	$999
JANOME Memory Craft 3500	$1199

The prices we've given are recommended retail. A tip from our expert is to visit big craft shows in your area, or major state-based shows like the Sydney Royal Easter Show, as manufacturers often have excellent deals available at this time.

MAKING THINGS EASIER

Our expert also found some key differences in how easy the machines are to use. We assessed how straightforward the instructions are, how easy the controls on the machine are to use, how easy it is to thread the machine and wind the bobbin. These are all key functions that can stump a novice if they're difficult or not well explained.

The **BERNINA** is the easiest model to use, with the **BROTHER, JANOME** and **HUSQVARNA** close together a little further behind. Further down the list again are the **SINGER, ELNA** and **PFAFF**. The latter three models require manual adjustments to perform a task or achieve a stitch that may involve several steps, while the other four have one-touch adjustment. And unlike the other models, where you can return to straight stitching with the press of a button, with these three models you have to reverse all the steps to get back to the starting point.

For people with a disability

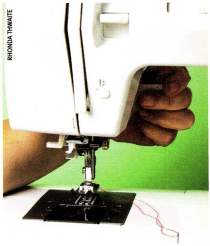
Models with touch-button controls would be more suitable for those with dexterity problems — models with slide controls and dials would be very difficult to set accurately.

Models with clear, well contrasted labelling would suit those with poorer eyesight, and models with a speed selector that allow the machine to run at a lower speed could also be an advantage.

Considering all these points, the best models for someone with such disabilities are the top three overall: the **BERNINA**, **JANOME** and **HUSQVARNA**.

LEFT-HANDED DISCRIMINATION

*Only the **BERNINA** and **HUSQVARNA** machines cater to left-handers, having the presser foot lever at the back rather than on the inside (right-hand side) of the needle mechanism like the other models. If you're left-handed, check how easy you'd find adapting to those models before buying. As the photo shows, it can be quite awkward.*



Features to look for

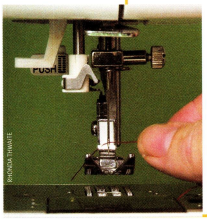
See the table, page 32, for which models have these features.

Bobbin fitting type: For those who've never used a sewing machine, the bobbin carries the bottom thread that forms the stitch by looping together with the top one that's threaded through the needle. Front-loading is the more traditional-style bobbin, where you remove the bobbin and shuttle (its casing) from the front. They tend to hold more thread than a top-loading bobbin.

With top-loading bobbins the shuttle is stationary and you just remove the bobbin, though you need longer fingernails to do it easily. These bobbins are generally see-through, so in theory you can see how much thread you have left, but unfortunately while you're sewing the fabric usually covers it.

Automatic needle threader: Finally no more eyestrain finding that hole? In fact the description's a little generous: our expert sewer has found they're often more fiddly and require more dexterity than just threading the needle with the aid of a white background behind the needle, which many models have (see left).

The white background behind the needle makes it even easier to thread than with an automatic threader.

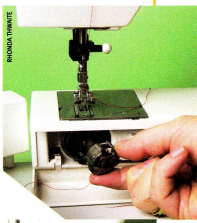


Presser foot pressure control: Allows the force applied by the presser foot (the foot that holds the two pieces of fabric together for sewing) to be adjusted to allow for use with much thicker or thinner fabrics. For example, if you were working on velvet with a thick pile, you'd lessen the pressure to allow the material to feed through evenly.

Speed selector: Allows you to set the speed of the machine, which is particularly useful for beginners wanting to slow it down while they're learning.

Tension adjustment: If you're using different types of thread or fabric, you may need to adjust the thread's tension to suit either. Having both upper and lower thread adjustments is an advantage for more experienced sewers wanting to do machine embroidery, appliqué or free embroidery.

Foot control: Look for a foot control that's a decent size. Some of the smaller, lightweight ones can slide from under your foot while you're sewing. (See the profiles, pages 32–33, for model details.)



A front-loading bobbin and shuttle (see text, left).

A top-loading bobbin is generally see-through plastic, so you can tell how much thread is left (see text, above left).

Profiles

All the tested machines are profiled in rank order, as they're all worth considering. Prices are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers in O

BERNINA ACTIVA 125

Price: $999

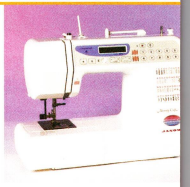
GOOD POINTS

- Very good at most stitches; back tacking (for fastening off a row of stitching) is excellent.
- Very easy to use.
- Very fast and simple to wind the bobbin and set up for sewing.
- Instructions are very easy to follow.
- Very easy to use touch-button controls.

BAD POINTS

- No dust cover or carry case supplied.
- The noisiest machine tested.

JANOME MEMORY CRAFT 3500



Price: $1199

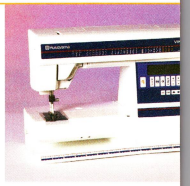
GOOD POINTS

- Very good at most stitches; back tacking is excellent.
- Easy to use touch-button controls.

BAD POINTS

- Not particularly good at sewing buttonholes.
- Dull sewing light.
- Small foot control.
- No speed selector.

HUSQVARNA VIKING FREESIA 425



Price: $999

GOOD POINTS

- Good at all stitches.
- Very good sewing light.
- Instructions are very easy to follow.
- Easy to use touch-button controls.

BAD POINTS

- No speed selector.

MAINTENANCE

To keep your machine shipshape, follow the cleaning and oiling recommendations in the manual. For optimum performance it's recommended you have it serviced every 12 months or so, but if you maintain it well yourself it may not be necessary so often.

PROFILES: ANTHONY SAWYER

	PERFORMANCE				4 FEATURES				
Brand / model (in rank order)	1 Overall score (%)	2 Performance score (%)	3 Ease of use score (%)	Noise (dB)*	Carry case / cover	Bobbin fitting type	Presser foot pressure control	Automatic needle threader	Speed se
BERNINA Activa 125	89	88	90	75	(B)	Front-loading bobbin and case		(C)	✓
JANOME Memory Craft 3500	84	85	83	69	✓	Drop-in clear-view bobbin	✓	✓	
HUSQVARNA Viking Freesia 425	80	80	80	68	✓	Drop-in clear-view bobbin	✓	(C)	
BROTHER Super Ace III M945	79	76	85	68	✓	Drop-in clear-view bobbin		✓ (C)	✓
PFAFF Select 1530	76	79	68	63	✓	Front-loading bobbin and case			✓
ELNA 3007	74	76	68	71	✓	Drop-in clear-view bobbin	✓	✓	✓
SINGER Quantum 3860 (A)	72	71	73	74	✓	Drop-in clear-view bobbin	✓	✓ (C)	✓

* *Noise measured at user's position when sewing straight stitch.*

** *Prices shown are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers in October 2002.*

(A) *Will be renamed Quantum Quilter and will have some additional accessories.*

(B) *Available as an optional extra.*

(C) *There's a white background behind the needle that helps with threading — see* Features to look for, *page 31, for more on this and auto threading.*

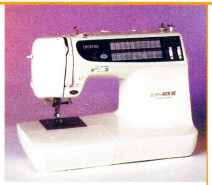
(D) *10 years on mechanical parts, two years on motor and electrical parts. Dealer gives free checking and adjustment for two years.*

(E) *Five years on electronic parts.*

(F) *If registration form is returned an additional three years on parts only.*

(G) *Swiss parts, assembled in Thailand.*

BROTHER SUPER ACE III M945



Price: $999

GOOD POINTS

- Very good at straight stitching and computer stitches.
- Touch-button controls are good, though slide controls are hard to set accurately.

BAD POINTS

- Not particularly good for zig-zag or buttonhole stitches.
- Small foot control.

ELNA 3007

Price: $1099

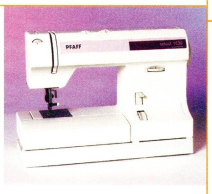
GOOD POINTS

- Very good at straight and zig-zag stitching.

BAD POINTS

- The worst for buttonholes.
- Slow to thread and wind bobbin.
- Instructions could be clearer.
- Slide controls are hard to set accurately.
- Many manual adjustments are required to achieve stitches, with the added difficulty of adjusting slide controls for stitch length and width.
- Small foot control.

PFAFF SELECT 1530



Price: $999

GOOD POINTS

- Reasonably good at most stitches; back tacking is excellent.
- A quiet machine.

BAD POINTS

- Threading the machine for bobbin winding is a slow process.
- Many manual adjustments are required to achieve stitches.

SINGER QUANTUM 3860

Price: $990

GOOD POINTS

- Very good at straight stitching.

BAD POINTS

- The worst machine tested at stretch and computer stitching.
- Dull sewing light.
- The second-noisiest machine tested.
- There's a slight delay between pressing the foot control and the machine starting to sew.
- Many manual adjustments are required to achieve stitches.
- Small foot control.

SPECIFICATIONS

nsion ljustment	No. of stitch variations	Speed (stitches / minute)	Max stitch length (mm)	Max stitch width (mm)	Weight (kg)	Dimensions (H x W x D, cm)	Warranty (years)	Origin	Manufacturer / distributor	Price ($)**
pper and lower	20	890	5.5	5	10.1	31 x 35 x 18	2 / 10 **(D)**	Thailand **(G)**	Bernina	999
pper	50	790	5	7	9.9	32 x 44 x 20	1 / 5 **(E)**	Taiwan	Janome	1199
pper	30	930	6	6	9.8	29 x 44 x 22	2 **(F)**	Sweden	VSM Australia	999
pper	40	860	5	6.5	10.8	33 x 47 x 24	1	Taiwan	Brother	999
pper and lower	20	950	6	5	9.2	29 x 43 x 22	2 **(F)**	Czech Republic	VSM Australia	999
pper	25	810	4	6	10.6	30 x 45 x 20	1	Taiwan	William C Jackson	1099
pper	35	770	4	7	9.4	31 x 44 x 20	1	Taiwan	Singer	990

1 Table notes

Overall score

This is based on 70% performance, 30% ease of use.

2 Performance score

The following stitches were assessed on a range of fabrics (see *Well stitched up*, page 30, for details): straight stitch, zig-zag, back tacking, stretch stitch, buttonhole, appliqué and computer stitches.

3 Ease of use score

We assessed the quality of the instructions, and ease of using the controls, threading the machine and winding the bobbin.

4 Features

See *Features to look for*, page 31, for an explanation.

MASTERFILE

JUDGMENT DAY for exterior paints

IN A NUTSHELL

- Most exterior paints *finished our marathon test with credit, but...*
- ...nine paints *are best avoided:* see What not to buy, *far right.*
- Some paints are *clearly better than others:* see What to buy, *far right.*
- Several white acrylic *paints are best suited for use only on timber: see the table, page 38.*

Our five-year durability test of paints has finally shown which can best withstand the wind, rain and sun.

Painting your house is an expensive and often time-consuming undertaking, so you want a long-lasting, durable product. Our five-year torture test of Australian exterior paints has just finished and the day of judgment is at hand — which have put in an above average performance? And which others have performed no better than you might expect of old-fashioned whitewash?

TOUGHING IT OUT

We applied acrylic (water-based) and enamel (oil-based) paints to timber and fibro panels according to manufacturers' directions and the relevant Australian standard for the exposure testing of paints.

We made it even tougher for our painted test panels by inclining them at 45° facing north, which accelerates their aging — five years in these harsh conditions roughly equate to 10 years on your house.

On test were all finishes in white and the nearest colour to Brunswick green, in the following brands (available five years ago):

- Accent (Mitre 10)
- Berger
- Bio
- Bristol
- British Paints
- Dulux
- Duralex
- Haymes
- Home
- Ideas
- Livos
- Pascol
- Performer (Kmart)
- Solver
- Style (Big W)
- Target
- Taubmans
- The Price Brand (Kmart)
- Thrifty Link
- Walpamur
- Wattyl
- White Knight Paints

WINNERS WILL BE GRINNERS...

Any cracking, flaking, peeling or erosion of a paint film is a serious structural failure that could lead to damage of the underlying building material. Timber is particularly vulnerable and expensive to repair.

Most paints survived the tough times and showed none of these devastating failures, which is good news for Australian paint buyers. So most did a reasonable job — but some paints did more, and survived much better aesthetically, with generally less chalking, colour change and/or dirt collection, and more gloss retention. These paints rate 'above average' and are the ones you should choose. See *What to buy*, below.

NO SMILES FOR THESE PAINTS

After just one year on test, **LIVOS Vindo Enamel** (green) and **LIVOS Vindo Coating Varnish** (white) showed serious cracking defects (see the photo, page 37). These paints have 'natural, solvent-free' formulations, which just aren't up to the job — our advice is not to buy them. At the five-year mark, these paints are still the only ones to show cracking.

Erosion of the paint film is just as bad as cracking and could damage the underlying building material. **DULUX Timbercolour Gloss Acrylic** (Brunswick green) was the only paint we saw in the five years that showed this defect. Definitely a paint we can't recommend — see the photo, page 39. Although the **Timbercolour** range was discontinued in 1999, if you've used it on your house, keep an eye out for this problem.

HARD AND BRITTLE, OR SOFT AND DIRTY?

Acrylic paints are much easier to use (and clean up after) than enamel paints and tend to be more durable. In fact, the Australian standard for the painting of buildings nominates acrylic paint for most exterior areas, but does recommend enamel on window frames and other trim areas. This is because the resins in enamel paints continually harden with age. While this can make them more prone to cracking and flaking, it also makes them hard-wearing and non-stick — definite advantages on doors and window frames.

When formulating acrylic paints, manufacturers must strike a balance between paint-film flexibility and hardness. Despite the arguments for enamel paints noted above, on timber softer paints have a

Continued on page 37

MORE PAINT INFO

For information on painting safely and cleanly when doing it yourself, see CHOICE, October 2000, or go to www.choice.com.au and type 'exterior paint' in the search box.

BEST AND WORST

WHAT TO BUY

LIGHT COLOURS (in our case, white; in alphabetical order)

Acrylic	Price ($)*
BRISTOL Timbercoat Low Sheen	54.70
BRITISH Paints 4 Seasons Gloss	45.00
DULUX Mouldshield Exterior Gloss	75.00
SOLVER Duraguard Satin	53.95
STYLE Exterior Gloss BEST BUY	42.00 (6 L)
TARGET Sunblock Gloss	Discontinued
WATTYL Solaguard Gloss	55.00–57.00
Enamel	
BERGER Full Gloss	47.00
TAUBMANS Ultra Enamel Gloss	56.00
DARKER COLOURS (in our case, dark green)	
WATTYL High Gloss Enamel	64.00

* *For a 4 L can, unless otherwise stated.*

WHAT *NOT* TO BUY

(in alphabetical order)

- **BERGER Full Gloss Enamel** (Brunswick green)
- **BIO 8 Different Colours Lacquer Enamel** (green)
- **DULUX Timbercolour Gloss Acrylic** (Brunswick green)
- **LIVOS Vindo Coating Varnish** (white)
- **LIVOS Vindo Enamel** (green)
- **SOLVER Duraguard Low Sheen Acrylic** (deep Brunswick green)
- **TARGET Sunblock Low Sheen Acrylic** (mid Bristol green)
- **TAUBMANS All Weather Gloss Acrylic** (mid Bristol green)
- **TAUBMANS Ultra Enamel High Gloss** (mid Bristol green)

See the tables on pages 36–39 for details of these paints and what's not good about them. It's notable that all but one of the paints that aren't recommended are in a dark colour. Lighter colours do seem to last better.

Green acrylic paints

Brand (alphabetically when performance is equal)	PERFORMANCE		PURCHASE DETAILS		
	Passes structural integrity requirements*	Kept looking good?	Still available?	Manufacturer / distributor	Price 4 L can ($)**
BERGER Solarscreen 100+ Gloss (Brunswick green)	✓	Average	✓ **(B)**	Dulux	47.00
BERGER Solarscreen 100+ Low Sheen (Brunswick green)	✓	Average	✓ **(B)**	Dulux	47.00
BRISTOL Timber Coat Gloss (Brunswick green)	✓	Average	✓	Taubmans	59.60
BRISTOL Timber Coat Low Sheen (Brunswick green)	✓	Average	✓	Taubmans	59.60
BRISTOL Weather Tough Gloss (Brunswick green)	✓	Average	✓ **(C)**	Taubmans	55.75
BRITISH PAINTS 4 Seasons Gloss (heritage green)	✓	Average	✓ **(D)**	Dulux	45.00
BRITISH PAINTS 4 Seasons Low Sheen (heritage green)	✓	Average	✓ **(D)**	Dulux	45.00
DULUX Weathershield Extreme Gloss (Brunswick green)	✓	Average	**(E)**	Dulux	**(E)**
DULUX Weathershield Extreme Low Sheen (Brunswick green)	✓	Average	**(E)**	Dulux	**(E)**
DURALEX Sunmaster Gloss (Brunswick green)	✓	Average	✓	Duralex Paints	49.95
DURALEX Sunmaster Low Sheen (Brunswick green)	✓	Average	✓	Duralex Paints	49.95
HAYMES Heritage Solashield Low Sheen (deep Brunswick green)	✓	Average	✓	Haymes Paint	74.75
HAYMES Heritage Solashield Gloss (deep Brunswick green)	✓	Average	✓	Haymes Paint	74.75
HAYMES Solashield Gloss (mid Brunswick green)	✓	Average	✓	Haymes Paint	71.35
HAYMES Solashield Low Sheen (mid Brunswick green)	✓	Average	✓	Haymes Paint	71.35
PASCOL Sunscreen Gloss (Brunswick green)	✓	Average	Discontinued 2001	Wattyl	na
PASCOL Sunscreen Low Sheen (Brunswick green)	✓	Average	Discontinued 2001	Wattyl	na
PERFORMER Solarshield Gloss (heritage green)	✓	Average	✓	Kmart	40.00
PERFORMER Solarshield Low Sheen (heritage green)	✓	Average	✓	Kmart	40.00
SOLVER Duraguard Gloss (deep Brunswick green)	✓	Average	✓	Solver Paints	53.95
SOLVER Duraguard Satin (deep Brunswick green)	✓	Average	✓	Solver Paints	53.95
TARGET House Paint Premium Gloss (heritage green)	✓	Average	Discontinued 1998	Target	na
TARGET Sunblock Gloss (mid Bristol green)	✓	Average	Discontinued 1998	Target	na
TAUBMANS All Weather Gloss (mid Bristol green) **(A)**	✓	Average **(A)**	**(A)**	Taubmans	**(A)**
TAUBMANS All Weather Low Sheen (mid Bristol green)	✓	Average	✓	Taubmans	49.10
TAUBMANS Sunproof Gloss (mid Bristol green)	✓	Average	✓ **(F)**	Taubmans	51.40
TAUBMANS Sunproof Low Sheen (mid Bristol green)	✓	Average	✓ **(F)**	Taubmans	51.40
TAUBMANS Timbertop Low Sheen (mid Bristol green)	✓	Average	✓	Taubmans	42.90
THRIFTY LINK Gloss (heritage green)	✓	Average	Discontinued 1999	Danks	na
WALPAMUR Block Out Exterior Gloss (federation green)	✓	Average	✓	Dulux	39.80
WALPAMUR Block Out Exterior Low Sheen (federation green)	✓	Average	✓	Dulux	39.80
WATTYL Solagard Gloss (middle Brunswick green)	✓	Average	✓	Wattyl	55.00–57.00
WATTYL Solagard Low Sheen (middle Brunswick green)	✓	Average	✓	Wattyl	55.00–57.00
WHITE KNIGHT PAINTS Sun Tough Gloss (Brunswick green)	✓	Average	Discontinued 2000	Taubmans	na
WHITE KNIGHT PAINTS Sun Tough Low Sheen (Brunswick green)	✓	Average	Discontinued 2000	Taubmans	na
NOT RECOMMENDED					
DULUX Timbercolour Gloss (Brunswick green)	No: Showed significant erosion	Showed a high amount of colour change after 3 years on test	Discontinued 1999	Dulux	na
SOLVER Duraguard Low Sheen (deep Brunswick green)	✓	Showed a high amount of colour change after 3 years on test	✓	Solver Paints	53.95
TARGET Sunblock Low Sheen (mid Bristol green)	✓	Showed a high amount of chalking after 4 years on test	Discontinued 1998	Target	na
TAUBMANS All Weather Gloss (mid Bristol green) **(A)**	✓	Showed a high amount of chalking after only 1 year on test. **(A)**	✓	Taubmans	49.10

na *Not applicable — paint discontinued or reformulated.*

* *Of AS/NZS 3580.4B1 1998.*

** *Prices are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers (sometimes as a range), or the lowest retail price we found in a store survey, both in September 2002.*

(A) *The 'not recommended' version of this paint is the reformulated (ie later) version of the same-name paint that rated 'average' for 'kept looking good' — clearly not a successful reformulation.*

(B) *Now called Berger SolarScreen Gloss/Low Sheen.*

(C) *Now called Bristol Weather Tough Forte Gloss.*

(D) *Now called British Paints in Colour Gloss/Low Sheen.*

(E) *Replaced in 2000 by Dulux Weathershield X10 Gloss/Low Sheen, which we haven't tested.*

(F) *Now called Taubmans Sunproof Max Gloss/Low Sheen.*

Green enamel paints

Brand (alphabetically when performance is equal)	PERFORMANCE: Passes structural integrity requirements*	PERFORMANCE: Kept looking good?	PURCHASE DETAILS: Still available?	PURCHASE DETAILS: Manufacturer / distributor	PURCHASE DETAILS: Price 4 L can ($)**
WATTYL High Gloss (deep Brunswick green)	✓	Above average	✓	Wattyl	64.00
BRISTOL Supreme Gloss (Brunswick green)	✓	Average	✓	Taubmans	66.40
BRITISH PAINTS Glossmasta High Gloss (heritage green)	✓	Average	✓ **(A)**	Dulux	45.00
DULUX Super Enamel High Gloss (Brunswick green)	✓	Average	✓	Dulux	70.00
HAYMES Heritage Full Gloss (mid Brunswick green)	✓	Average	✓	Haymes Paint	66.00
WALPAMUR Exterior Gloss (Federation green)	✓	Average	✓	Dulux	39.80
NOT RECOMMENDED					
BERGER Full Gloss (Brunswick green)	✓	Showed much higher gloss loss after 1 year on test than most other green enamel paints	✓	Dulux	47.00
BIO 8 Different Colours Lacquer (green)	✓	Lost nearly all of its gloss after 1 year on test, and rated poorly for colour change	**(B)**	Bio Products	na
LIVOS Vindo (green)	No: This paint showed serious cracking failure after just 1 year on test	Not evaluated after first-year structural failure	Discontinued 2002 **(C)**	Livos	na
TAUBMANS Ultra Enamel High Gloss (mid Bristol green)	✓	Showed much higher gloss loss after 1 year on test than most other green enamel paints	**(D)**	Taubmans	na

na *Not applicable — paint discontinued or reformulated.*

* *Of AS/NZS 1580.481 1998.*

** *Prices are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers (sometimes as a range), or the lowest retail price we found in a store survey, both in September 2002.*

(A) *Now called British Paints in Colour Full Gloss.*

(B) *This paint has been reformulated. The manufacturer says it now has a more UV-resistant pigment.*

(C) *Now changed to Livos Vindo Natural Oil Paint, which isn't suitable for exterior use in Australia.*

(D) *This paint has been reformulated.*

From page 35

potential advantage in that they may be better able to cope with timber's natural movement in response to changes in heat and humidity. However, there's a drawback — the softer the paint, the more dirt will settle into it.

If you're painting a more stable building material, like brick, it makes sense to avoid paints that are too 'soft' and could become relatively dirty.

In the past three years we've found a number of white acrylic paints that have become consistently dirtier than other white acrylics. This doesn't make them poor paints, just better suited to exterior timber, where they could offer a flexibility advantage, rather than to more stable materials like brick or concrete. (see the photo, page 39.)

Accordingly, these paints get a 'for timber only' recommendation — see the table on page 38).

LOSS OF GLOSS

As well as being harder, enamel paints are also recommended for doors, window frames and decorative trim because they generally have a better gloss performance than acrylics. However, our test found that all the dark green enamels were poor in terms of gloss loss. If you want a long-lasting gloss shine, our results suggest you choose a light colour.

Paints with particularly premature gloss loss were: **BIO 8 Different Colours Enamel Lacquer** (green) and **TAUBMANS Ultra Enamel High Gloss** (mid Bristol green (both since reformulated, according to the manufacturers); and **BERGER Full Gloss Enamel** (Brunswick green). These paints lost 97%, 82% and 73% of their gloss respectively on timber, after just one year on test. The **BIO 8** paint also rated poorly for colour change after only one year.

The marginally best dark-coloured gloss performer on timber is **WATTYL High Gloss Enamel**, which retained 5% more gloss than any other green enamel paint — but over five years it still lost 87% of its original gloss.

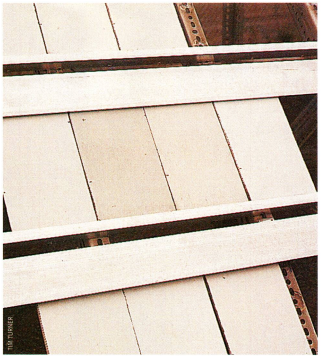
The poor cracking performance of the Livos Vindo Enamel (green) paint after just one year is clearly evident on the left-hand side of the panel, while the right-hand side shows the paint in its original condition.

White acrylic paints

Brand (alphabetically when performance is equal)	PERFORMANCE: Passes structural integrity requirements*	PERFORMANCE: Kept looking good?	PURCHASE DETAILS: Still available?	PURCHASE DETAILS: Manufacturer / distributor	PURCHASE DETAILS: Price 4 L can ($)**
BRISTOL Timber Coat Low Sheen (white)	✓	Above average	✓	Taubmans	54.70
BRITISH PAINTS 4 Seasons Gloss (brilliant white)	✓	Above average	✓ **(B)**	Dulux	45.00
DULUX Mouldshield Exterior Gloss (vivid white)	✓	Above average	✓	Dulux	75.00
SOLVER Duraguard Satin (white)	✓	Above average	✓	Solver Paints	53.95
STYLE Exterior Gloss (white)	✓	Above average	✓	Big W	42.00 **(H)**
TARGET Sunblock Gloss (white)	✓	Above average	Discontinued 1998	Target	na
WATTYL Solagard Gloss (white)	✓	Above average	✓	Wattyl	55.00–57.00
BERGER Solarscreen 100+ Gloss (super white)	✓	Average	✓ **(C)**	Dulux	47.00
BRISTOL Timber Coat Gloss (white)	✓	Average	✓	Taubmans	54.70
BRISTOL Weather Tough Gloss (white)	✓	Average	✓ **(D)**	Taubmans	59.20
BRISTOL Weather Tough Low Sheen (white)	✓	Average	✓ **(D)**	Taubmans	59.20
BRITISH PAINTS 4 Seasons Low Sheen (white)	✓	Average	✓ **(B)**	Dulux	45.00
DULUX Timbercolour Gloss (vivid white)	✓	Average	Discontinued 1999	Dulux	na
DULUX Weathershield Extreme Gloss (vivid white)	✓	Average	**(E)**	Dulux	**(E)**
DURALEX Sunmaster Gloss (white)	✓	Average	✓	Duralex Paints	49.95
DURALEX Sunmaster Low Sheen (white)	✓	Average	✓	Duralex Paints	49.95
HAYMES Solashield Gloss (white)	✓	Average	✓	Haymes Paint	59.90
HAYMES Solashield Low Sheen (white)	✓	Average	✓	Haymes Paint	59.90
HOME Exterior Gloss (white)	✓	Average	✓ **(F)**	Danks	50.00 **(J)**
HOME Exterior Low Sheen (white)	✓	Average	✓ **(F)**	Danks	50.00 **(J)**
IDEAS Exterior Gloss (white)	✓	Average	✓	Danks	41.00
PASCOL Sunscreen Gloss (white)	✓	Average	✓	Wattyl	55.00–57.00
PERFORMER Solarshield Gloss (white)	✓	Average	✓	Kmart	40.00
PERFORMER Solarshield Low Sheen (white)	✓	Average	✓	Kmart	40.00
SOLVER Duraguard Gloss (white)	✓	Average	✓	Solver Paints	53.95
STYLE Exterior Low Sheen (white)	✓	Average	✓	Big W	42.00 **(H)**
TARGET House Paint Premium Gloss (white)	✓	Average	Discontinued 1998	Target	na
TAUBMANS All Weather Gloss (white)	✓	Average	✓	Taubmans	46.00
TAUBMANS Sunproof Gloss (white)	✓	Average	✓ **(G)**	Taubmans	51.40
TAUBMANS Sunproof Low Sheen (white)	✓	Average	✓ **(G)**	Taubmans	51.40
THE PRICE BRAND Gloss (white)	✓	Average	Discontinued 2001	Kmart	na
THRIFTY LINK Gloss (white)	✓	Average	Discontinued 1999	Danks	na
WALPAMUR Block Out Exterior Gloss (white)	✓	Average	✓	Dulux	39.80
WALPAMUR Block Out Exterior Low Sheen (white)	✓	Average	✓	Dulux	39.80
WATTYL Solagard Low Sheen (white)	✓	Average	✓	Wattyl	55.00–57.00
WHITE KNIGHT PAINTS Gloss (white)	✓	Average	Discontinued 2000	Taubmans	na
WHITE KNIGHT PAINTS Satin (white)	✓	Average	Discontinued 2000	Taubmans	na
WHITE KNIGHT PAINTS Sun Tough Gloss (white)	✓	Average	Discontinued 2000	Taubmans	na
WHITE KNIGHT PAINTS Sun Tough Low Sheen (white)	✓	Average	Discontinued 2000	Taubmans	na
FOR TIMBER ONLY (A)					
ACCENT Exterior Solar Low Sheen (white)	✓	High dirt pick-up after only 3 years	✓	Mitre 10	45.95
BERGER Solarscreen 100+ Low Sheen (super white)	✓	High dirt pick-up	✓ **(C)**	Dulux	47.00
DULUX Timbercolour Low Sheen (vivid white)	✓	High dirt pick-up	Discontinued 1999	Dulux	na
DULUX Weathershield Extreme Low Sheen (vivid white)	✓	High dirt pick-up	**(E)**	Dulux	**(E)**
PASCOL Sunscreen Low Sheen (white)	✓	High dirt pick-up	✓	Wattyl	55.00–57.00
SOLVER Duraguard Low Sheen (white)	✓	High dirt pick-up	✓	Solver Paints	53.95
TARGET Sunblock Low Sheen (white)	✓	High dirt pick-up	Discontinued 1998	Target	na
TAUBMANS All Weather Low Sheen (white)	✓	High dirt pick-up	✓	Taubmans	46.00
TAUBMANS Timbertop Low Sheen (white)	✓	High dirt pick-up	✓	Taubmans	41.70

Footnotes to this table are above right.

na *Not applicable — paint discontinued or reformulated.*
* *Of AS/NZS 1580.481 1998.*
** *Prices are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers (sometimes as a range), or the lowest retail price we found in a store survey, both in September 2002.*
(A) *See* Hard and brittle, or soft and dirty?, *page 35.*
(B) *Now called British Paints in Colour Gloss/Low Sheen (white).*
(C) *Now called Berger SolarScreen Gloss/Low Sheen.*
(D) *Now called Bristol Weather Tough Forte Gloss/Low Sheen.*
(E) *Replaced in 2000 by Dulux Weathershield X10 Gloss/Low Sheen, which we haven't tested.*
(F) *Now called Home Weatherguard Gloss/Low Sheen.*
(G) *Now called Taubmans Sunproof Max Gloss/Low Sheen.*
(H) *For a 6 L can.*
(I) *This paint doesn't have a recommended retail price; $50 was a special price for Father's Day 2002.*


TIM TURNER

The dirt pick-up on Solver Duraguard Low Sheen and Taubmans Timbertop Low Sheen acrylic white paints (centre panels) doesn't make them the best choices for brick. However, this could mean that on timber they could have the advantage of slightly more flexibility. (See Hard and brittle, or soft and dirty?, *page 35, and the white acrylics table, far left.)*

White enamel paints

Brand (alphabetically when performance is equal)	PERFORMANCE		PURCHASE DETAILS		
	Passes structural integrity requirements*	Kept looking good?	Still available?	Manufacturer / distributor	Price 4 L can ($)**
BERGER Full Gloss (white)	✓	Above average	✓	Dulux	47.00
TAUBMANS Ultra Enamel Gloss (white)	✓	Above average	✓	Taubmans	56.00
BIO Lacquer Gloss (white)	✓	Average	**(A)**	Bio Products	na
BRISTOL Supreme Gloss (white)	✓	Average	✓	Taubmans	62.25
BRITISH PAINTS Glossmasta High Gloss (brilliant white)	✓	Average	✓ **(B)**	Dulux	45.00
DULUX Super Enamel High Gloss (vivid white)	✓	Average	✓	Dulux	70.00
HAYMES High Gloss (white)	✓	Average	✓	Haymes Paint	59.90
STYLE High Gloss (white)	✓	Average	✓	Big W	37.00
THE PRICE BRAND Gloss (white)	✓	Average	Discontinued 2001	Kmart	na
WALPAMUR Exterior Gloss (white)	✓	Average	✓	Dulux	39.80
WATTYL High Gloss (white)	✓	Below average	✓	Wattyl	64.00
NOT RECOMMENDED					
LIVOS Vindo Coating Varnish (white)	No: Showed serious cracking failure after just 1 year on test	Not evaluated after first-year structural failure	Discontinued 2002 **(C)**	Livos	na

na *Not applicable — paint discontinued or reformulated.*
* *Of AS/NZS 1580.481 1998.*
** *Prices are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers (sometimes as a range), or the lowest retail price we found in a store survey, both in September 2002.*
(A) *Reformulated. The manufacturer says it now has a stronger binder.*
(B) *Now called British Paints in Colour Full Gloss (white).*
(C) *Now changed to Livos Vindo Natural Oil Paint, which isn't suitable for exterior use in Australia.*

TIM TURNER

The surface erosion on Dulux Timbercolour Gloss Acrylic (Brunswick green) could lead to significant damage to your building materials, not to mention looking decidedly unsightly — look out for this problem if you used this paint on your home.

Rubber gloves

Which last the distance and are comfortable to wear?

ANTHONY SAWERS

IN A NUTSHELL

Price is generally a good indicator of the quality and comfort of rubber gloves, but we did find a good pair among the top-rated brands that was quite a bit cheaper (see What to buy, *right).*

When you have a huge pile of dishes, the car or the windows to wash, a good pair of household gloves can make the job a little easier. You can use hotter water and protect your hands and nails from the drying effects of detergent and water.

But which of the many brands on supermarket shelves will last the distance? Which ones give you a good grip? And which won't leave your hands clammy or smelly?

We tested 17 brands that are widely available in major supermarkets (ranging in price from just under 40 cents to more than $2.50 a pair) for stretchiness and resistance to tears and punctures, and asked over 200 CHOICE Home Testers to give us their verdict.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD GLOVE?

According to the trialists, good heat protection from hot water is most important in a pair of gloves. They also want to be able to grip dishes with confidence and move their hands freely while wearing gloves.

And then there's the ease of donning your gloves and taking them off. Our trialists generally found gloves lined with cotton (or flock) easy to take off — **FARMLAND Easyfit** and **HOT PINKS** stood out in this respect.

Last but not least, there's the smell … Most trialists indicated the gloves smelt fairly neutral, but more than half commented about the **MERIDAN**'s (from Aldi) unpleasant smell. And the special "fun fruit fragrance" of the **HOT PINKS** appealed to only 62% of the trialists; 28% found it unpleasant.

Profiles

Gloves in the *What to buy*

ANSELL SUPER

Price: $2.12

- Very good score for heat protection in the user trial.

Trialists' comments

- "I liked the extra length, so there was no water leaking inside. They're very thick, which is good so my fingernails won't slice through them quickly."
- "Although the heat protection bordered on excellent, the slightly clammy feeling they left on my hands restricts outright approval."

WHAT ABOUT THE REST?

- Cheaper gloves tended to get lower scores, especially in the lab tests. **CLEAN LIVING, FARMLAND Easyfit** and **BLACK & GOLD** (now discontinued) are the best of the gloves costing less than $1 a pair.
- If you're allergic to latex (natural rubber), **HYGIENE Plus Silktouch** scored slightly the higher of the two vinyl gloves in the test — neither pair achieved a very high lab score (see right).

WHAT TO BUY

ANSELL Super	$2.12
ANSELL Fresh 'n' Dry	$2.57
ASTRA Supreme	$1.39

d in rank order. Prices are those we paid for one pair in July 2002.

ANSELL FRESH 'N' DRY

Price: $2.57

- Trialists gave very good scores for heat protection, keeping their hands fresh and dry, flexibility and grip.

Trialists' comments

- "A nice glove to use. I appreciated the protection from heat and the feel on my hands."
- "I would buy these and use them often — very pleasing. Made washing up easier, as the water could be maximum heat."

ASTRA SUPREME

Price: $1.39

- Best score in the user trial, but a lower lab score than the other two gloves profiled.

Trialists' comments

- "I couldn't find anything but good with these gloves."
- "The beauty of these gloves was the long cuff that didn't flip back, and the ease of getting them on and off."

PROFILES: ANTHONY SWIRES

The trial

CHOICE HOME TESTER

Our thanks go to the more than 200 CHOICE Home Testers who got their hands into hot water for this test. As usual, they received the gloves in unmarked bags, so they didn't know which three brands they were using. Each brand was tried by 20 to 30 people.

Each trialist used one brand in three consecutive washing-up sessions with hot water and then commented on how easy they were to put on and take off and how well they protected hands from the heat of the water. They also considered the gloves' flexibility, grip and smell, and whether they kept their hands fresh and dry, before awarding an overall score.

Home Tester Marie Melick of Sydney: "I enjoyed taking part in the rubber glove trial. Strange as it may seem, it's important that I buy good-quality rubber gloves. I don't only use them for dishwashing, I have pairs for hand clothes washing, washing the dogs, cleaning silver, cleaning the bathroom — I have an endless list of chores that I use rubber gloves for."

PHOTO: LISA TOMASETTI

Brand / model* (in rank order)	1 Overall score (%)	2 Lab score (%)	3 User trial score (%)	4 Lining	Manufacturer / distributor	Price per pair ($)**
ANSELL Super	77	78	75	Cotton	Freudenberg Household Products	2.12
ANSELL Fresh 'n' Dry	76	71	80	Foam	Freudenberg Household Products	2.57
ASTRA Supreme	76	66	85	Cotton	Clorox Australia	1.39
CHUX Extra Grip	72	69	75	Pearl	Clorox Australia	2.20
HOT PINKS	69	62	75	Cotton	Power Brands	1.99
SMART GLOVES by Ansell	68	65	70	Silver	Freudenberg Household Products	1.19
DURA FRESH Anti-bacterial	67	59	75	Cotton	E D Oates	1.24
CLEAN LIVING	66	67	65	Silver	Universal Wholesalers	0.85
FARMLAND Easyfit	65	60	75	Cotton	Coles	0.95
BLACK & GOLD (A)	64	58	70	Cotton	IGA	0.45
ASTRA Economy	62	58	65	None	Clorox Australia	0.96
NO FRILLS	62	58	65	Cotton	Franklins	0.49
ANSELL Silverlined	61	66	55	Silver	Freudenberg Household Products	1.72
HOME BRAND	60	60	60	Cotton	Woolworths	0.39
MERIDAN (B)	59	48	70	Cotton	Aldi Stores	0.45
HYGIENE PLUS Silktouch (vinyl)	57	43	70	None	Power Brands	1.77
CHUX Multi-purpose (vinyl)	53	31	75	Cotton	Clorox Australia	2.22

* *Except for two brands made of vinyl, as indicated, all the gloves are made of natural rubber/latex.*

** *This is the price we paid in July 2002 for one pair.*

(A) *Discontinued.*

(B) *Discontinued; the manufacturer says it will be replaced by a thicker, stronger glove.*

1 Overall score
This is a combination of the lab and user trial scores, weighted equally.

2 Lab score
We tested the gloves' stretchiness and resistance to tearing and puncture. The results for each of these tests contributed equally to the lab score.

3 User trial score
See *The trial*, above.

4 Lining
See *What makes a good glove?*, far left, for more on this.

DVD players

MASTERFILE

Excellent pictures, superior sound and ever-decreasing prices could make a DVD player an attractive item for your Christmas wish list.

IN A NUTSHELL

- **On test: 18 DVD players,** *including two DVD-capable game consoles and two DVD-VCR combos. And of course they can all play CDs too.*
- **All the regular DVD players** *tested give you superior picture and sound quality, even with the most basic connections.*
- **Even the two computer game consoles** *can give you excellent pictures when watching DVDs, though the sound isn't quite as good.*

Been to your local video shop lately and seen the ever-expanding shelf space allocated to DVDs? Their superior picture and sound quality and user convenience — compared with a video tape — obviously play a part in their rising popularity, as do fast-falling prices for DVD players: the first models we reported on three years ago cost around three times as much as the ones in this latest test.

So if you haven't yet succumbed to DVD technology for your home entertainment, you may think the time's right now, considering Christmas is just around the corner.

HIGH-QUALITY PICTURES AND SOUND

One model stood out from the rest and five others are well worth considering, but you'd probably be happy with any of the models tested, especially if you found it at a good price. As far as picture and sound quality are concerned, we hardly found any differences between them when watching a movie.

The differences in the picture and sound quality scores in the table (page 46) are based on viewing picture patterns and still pictures, and technical sound tests, which can show up differences you don't notice in the thick of watching a movie.

However, some models are easier to operate and use less energy on standby than others — the table gives you the details.

DVD-VCR COMBOS

With the **SAMSUNG DVD-V7000** and **LG DC593W** you can watch both DVDs and video tapes and record on video. Such a combination unit could be useful if you have an older TV with no AV input sockets, as you can connect the combo to the TV's RF (aerial) connection. However, the picture and sound quality from RF are unlikely to be as good as you'd get with the other types of connection — see *Picture output*, right, for more on this.

A combo could also be handy instead of separate video and DVD players if you often record TV programs on video to time-shift when you can watch them. It lets you do this as well as watch DVDs with better picture and sound quality than videos.

A combo will cut down on the number of leads behind your machines, as you only have to hook up one unit to your TV. And it'll probably save you a little space — one combo would take up less shelf height than separate video and DVD players.

On the downside, if either the DVD or video section breaks down, you'll have to go without both while it's being repaired.

And, while it'd be easy with a combo to record from DVD to video, we can't think of many advantages of doing so, unless you want to copy DVDs you burnt yourself onto tape to play somewhere else. The DVDs

you hire from your video shop tend to be copy-protected, and copying others could violate copyright.

GAME CONSOLES

If you or your children are into computer games, you may have or be interested in a **MICROSOFT Xbox** or **SONY PlayStation 2**, which also play DVDs. We added them to our test to see how they compare with regular DVD players. Both delivered pretty good pictures, but their technical sound quality is notably worse.

While they have fancy onscreen display and menu systems, both scored comparatively low for ease of use. They have neither front panel indicators nor front panel controls, and are a bit more difficult to program for CD playback, mainly because of their unconventional style.

Overall, these game consoles lack some of the capabilities most regular DVD players have — for example, they can't play a video CD or MP3 disc. And if your kids are really into games, you'll never get near it to watch DVDs anyway.

OUTPUT OPTIONS

We all know DVD technology delivers superior sound and picture quality, but the DVD player is only one component, and for optimum results you may need other pieces of equipment you don't have … yet. So if you're a novice to the technology, familiarise yourself with the various options before you buy, so your purchase won't disappoint you.

Picture output

Most newer TVs have a **composite video** input socket (usually an RCA-type socket with a yellow insert), which you can use to connect your DVD player's picture signal to the TV. This is the most commonly used connector, and the one we used in our tests.

If your TV doesn't have a direct video input, it's probably too old to get much advantage out of DVD technology. However, you could buy one of the DVD-VCR combos we tested, which you can connect to the TV's RF (aerial) connection (see left). To get full advantage from a DVD player, though, you're probably better off buying a new TV.

If your TV has an **S-video** input socket (usually a four-pin mini-DIN-type connector) to connect a DVD player to, you'll get a higher-quality picture than with a composite connection.

You can get an even higher-quality picture if your TV has a **component video** input socket (usually a set of three RCA-type sockets with a red, green and blue insert), through which the picture is passed on to the TV in three picture signal components.

Sound output

For straightforward stereo sound, connect the stereo output of the DVD player to the TV's **stereo input socket** to receive sound from two channels. Most bigger TVs have stereo inputs nowadays. If yours is mono only, you'll have to use a stereo-to-mono plug adaptor.

Then there's **surround sound**, from a DVD player's digital output sockets. This delivers potentially better sound, but you need a corresponding processing unit (a surround-sound amplifier) that can decode the signal and deliver multi-channel surround sound.

To get surround sound if your multi-channel amplifier doesn't have a digital input and can't do the processing, you need a DVD player with **six-channel decoded surround audio output sockets** — see the table for tested models that have this feature.

To get the full benefits of cinema-like surround sound from your DVD player, you also need to properly configure the five speakers and one subwoofer that comprise the set-up (see CHOICE, September 2002).

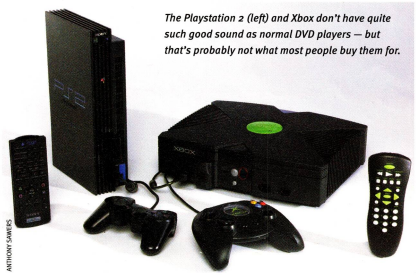
Dolby Digital and DTS (Digital Theatre System) are the most common multi-channel sound formats encoded on a DVD.

WHAT TO BUY

PIONEER DV-355	$449
LOEWE Xemix 5106 DO	$699
SONY DVP-NS305	$399
TEAC DV-2150 (A)	$279
YAMAHA DVD-S520 (A)	$449
PANASONIC DVD-RV32	$399

(A) Discontinued, but you may still find them in shops.

The **PIONEER** stood out from the rest; the other five models are well worth considering.



The Playstation 2 (left) and Xbox don't have quite such good sound as normal DVD players — but that's probably not what most people buy them for.

ANTHONY SAWERS

Profiles

Models in the *What to buy* list and the two DVD-VCR combos tested are profiled in rank order from left to right. Prices are recommended retail, as prov
See the table, page 46, for the DVD players' scores and features not listed in the profiles. They're explained below.

PIONEER DV-355

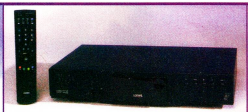
Price: $449

GOOD POINTS

- Very good remote control.
- One-touch skip to the start of the current DVD chapter or CD track (all the models can skip to the start of the previous and next tracks).
- Programmed play for DVD.

BAD POINTS

- Nothing in particular.



LOEWE XEMIX 5106 DO

Price: $699

GOOD POINTS

- One-touch skip to the start of the current DVD chapter or CD track.
- Programmed play for DVD.

BAD POINTS

- You can't mark the beginning and end of a CD or DVD segment for repeated play.

SONY DVP-NS305

Price: $399

GOOD POINTS

- One-touch skip to the start of the current DVD chapter or CD track.
- Programmed play for DVD.

BAD POINTS

- Doesn't have zoom or pan features (see below).

Features

All the DVD players tested, unless noted otherwise here, can perform the following functions and have the following features for both CD and DVD (where relevant).

- Composite video output (all), stereo audio output (all), digital audio output (except the **MICROSOFT**, which therefore can't produce surround sound), Dolby Digital (all) and DTS capability (except the **MICROSOFT**) — see *Output options*, page 43, for more on this.
- Play DVD video (all), CD audio (all), CD-RW audio (all), MP3 and video CD (except the two game consoles), and CD-R audio (except the **MICROSOFT**).
- All except the **MICROSOFT** can play an NTSC-format DVD (mainly from the US) and produce a pseudo-PAL (the local format) output that most newer TVs can use but which may not be compatible with older TVs. The **MICROSOFT, TEAC, PHILIPS, NINTAUS, PALSONIC** and the two DVD-VCR combos can also produce an output that's directly compatible with local-format PAL and can be used by almost all TVs.
- 4:3 letterbox, 4:3 pan&scan, and 16:9 wide-screen TV shape settings if provided on the disc.
- Skip to the start of the previous or next DVD chapter/CD track.
- Fast play forward or reverse (except the **MICROSOFT** for CD).
- Slow view forward.
- Still/pause.
- Resume play for DVD — start playing at the point when it was last stopped, as opposed to paused.
- Step-by-step movement forward for DVD.
- You can mark the beginning and end of a particular DVD or CD segment for repeated play (except the **LOEWE**).
- Play an entire CD (all) or one track repeatedly (except the **MICROSOFT**).
- Programmed play mode for CD (you do it a different way with the two game consoles).
- Selectable camera angle, subtitle language and dialogue language, if provided on the disc.
- Parental control lock (except the **MICROSOFT**).
- Onscreen display/menus in other languages (except the **PALSONIC**).

OTHER FEATURES

The table shows which models have these features, unless noted here.

- Bookmarking — to mark the beginning of a scene so you can return to it easily.
- Can play a region 1 DVD. This could be important if you buy DVDs from overseas. DVDs (and DVD players) are encoded with global region codes so that DVDs can't be watched in countries where the movie's still showing in cinemas. Australia is in region 4 (together with NZ, the Pacific islands, Central and South America and the Caribbean). The US, Canada and US territories are in region 1.
- Child lock — to lock the front panel controls so you can only operate the player with the remote control.
- Microphone sockets and control — to play a karaoke or 'minus-one' disc and hear your voice mixed with the music.
- Zoom and pan — to enlarge the picture (zoom) and select an area in the picture to view (pan).
- Programmed play for DVD — to program it to play certain parts in the order you select. The **LG, RCA, THOMSON, PHILIPS, PALSONIC** and **MICROSOFT** don't have this feature.

ufacturers in October 2002, or the price we paid in July 2002.

TEAC DV-2150

Price: $279

GOOD POINTS

- Front panel controls are the easiest to use.
- Can produce a PAL output when playing an NTSC DVD. This is useful if you want to watch foreign NTSC-format DVDs (mainly from the US) and your TV doesn't support NTSC (but also see *Features*, below left).
- One-touch skip to the start of the current DVD chapter or CD track.
- Programmed play for DVD.

BAD POINTS

- Nothing in particular.

YAMAHA DVD-S520

Price: $449

GOOD POINTS

- One-touch skip to the start of the current DVD chapter or CD track.
- Programmed play for DVD.

BAD POINTS

- The front panel indicator display shows the title and chapter numbers, but they're difficult to figure out: there's no separation between the digits.

PANASONIC DVD-RV32

Price: $399

GOOD POINTS

- One-touch skip to the start of the current DVD chapter or CD track.
- Programmed play for DVD.

BAD POINTS

- Doesn't have pan feature (see below left).

PROFILES: ANTHONY SAWERS

DVD-VCR COMBOS

SAMSUNG DVD-V7000

Price: $699

GOOD POINTS

- Can produce a PAL output when playing an NTSC DVD (see *Features*, left).
- Programmed play for DVD.
- One-touch skip to the start of the current DVD chapter, but not to the start of the current CD track.

BAD POINTS

- See *DVD-VCR combos*, page 42, for the pros and cons of combo units in general.

LG DC593W

Price: $599

GOOD POINTS

- Can produce a PAL output when playing an NTSC DVD (see *Features*, left).
- One-touch skip to the start of the current DVD chapter or CD track.

BAD POINTS

- No S-video output.
- See *DVD-VCR combos*, page 42, for the pros and cons of combo units in general.

WHAT ABOUT THE REST?

You'd probably be happy with any of the models tested, especially if you got it for a good price.

- The **PALSONIC** scored comparatively low for ease of use. When you program it to play CDs you can only see the program item you're entering rather than all program items stored, and you can't edit items from the stored selection.
- The **NINTAUS's** picture looks a bit dull and slightly hazy, especially in darker scenes.
- The **MICROSOFT Xbox** and **SONY Playstation 2** scored lower for sound quality and ease of use, but they're designed primarily as game consoles, which you'd use differently from a DVD player anyway.
- The **KENWOOD**, **NINTAUS** and **PALSONIC** use a lot more energy than the others when on standby.

Brand / model (in rank order)	PERFORMANCE 1 Overall score (%)	2 Picture quality score (%)	3 Sound quality score (%)	4 Ease of use score (%)	5 Faulty disc handling score (%)	6 Standby energy score (%)	7 FEATURES DVD-VCR combination	Component video output	6-char decod audio
PIONEER DV-355	91	100	94	82	90	90		✓	
LOEWE Xemix 5106 DO	85	100	92	75	90	50			
SONY DVP-NS305	85	100	95	71	70	90		✓	
TEAC DV-2150 **(A)**	85	92	92	70	100	60			
YAMAHA DVD-S520 **(A)**	85	100	92	75	90	50		✓	
PANASONIC DVD-RV32	84	96	93	67	90	70		✓	
SAMSUNG DVD-V7000	82	96	95	75	75	50	✓	✓	
TOSHIBA SD-2500Y	81	96	94	67	68	80		✓	
THOMSON DTH520BAU	80	100	87	65	90	30		✓	✓
LG DC593W	79	96	92	67	68	60	✓	✓	
RCA DRA5008	79	100	83	65	90	30		✓	
PHILIPS DVD 736K/751 **(A)**	78	96	95	63	75	40		✓	✓
SAMSUNG DVDS124	78	96	92	73	58	60		✓	
KENWOOD DVF-3060	77	100	93	60	90	5		✓	
NINTAUS DVD-N9808	76	84	86	67	100	10		✓	✓
PALSONIC DVD 4000	75	96	88	58	90	5			
GAME CONSOLES									
MICROSOFT Xbox	75	100	57	64	80	70			
SONY PlayStation 2 SCPH-39002	71	96	64	41	80	80			

* *Rounded up to the next centimetre, all protruding parts except cord included.*

** *Prices are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers in October 2002, or the price we paid in July 2002.*

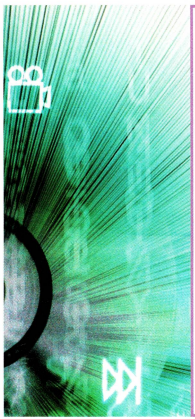
(A) *This model has been discontinued, but you may still find it in shops.*

(B) *One year on laser mechanisms, motor assemblies and disc tray mechanisms.*

(C) *Extra two years on drum and head parts.*

(D) *Remote control sold separately for $50.*

(E) *Remote control sold separately for $49.*



How reliable have subscribers found them?

We asked subscribers if their DVD player had needed repairs in the previous 12 months and whether they'd buy the same brand again.

DVD players are a fairly recent addition to the home entertainment market, so it's not surprising that overall only 5% had needed repair — the products were fairly new and had all been bought within the past two years.

Playing problems were the most common (almost 10%), particularly with **SAMSUNG** and **TEAC** machines (19% and 17% respectively reporting this).

The graphs show the results for brands for which we received enough replies to report on (the number in brackets is the number of responses). Differences of more than 8% are meaningful.

PERCENTAGE NOT NEEDING REPAIR

ALL DVD PLAYERS (2245)	95
Philips (100)	98
Pioneer (366)	98
LG (86)	97
Panasonic (230)	97
Toshiba (190)	97
Sony (394)	96
Teac (64)	92
Samsung (88)	85

PERCENTAGE WHO'D BUY THE SAME BRAND AGAIN

Pioneer (368)	97
Panasonic (234)	95
Toshiba (189)	93
Sony (394)	90
LG (89)	89
Philips (101)	84
Teac (62)	84
Samsung (90)	81

ing	Can play a region 1 DVD	Child lock	Microphone sockets and controls	Zoom / pan	SPECIFICATIONS Dimensions (H x W x D, cm)*	Warranty (years)	Origin	Manufacturer / distributor	Price ($)**
	✓			✓ / ✓	6 x 42 x 28	1	Malaysia	Pioneer	449
	✓			✓ / ✓	9 x 44 x 33	2 **(B)**	Hungary	International Dynamics	899
	✓				6 x 43 x 26	1	Malaysia	Sony	399
				✓ / ✓	9 x 43 x 31	1	China	Teac	279
				✓ / ✓	9 x 44 x 32	2	China	Yamaha Music	449
				✓ / –	8 x 43 x 26	1	China	Panasonic	399
				✓ / ✓	10 x 43 x 33	1	Korea	Samsung	699
				✓ / ✓	7 x 43 x 24	1	China	Castel	399
		✓		✓ / –	10 x 43 x 31	1	China	Thomson Multimedia	399
		✓		✓ / ✓	10 x 43 x 36	1 **(C)**	Indonesia	LG	599
		✓		✓ / –	10 x 43 x 31	1	China	Thomson Multimedia	299
	✓		✓	✓ / ✓	8 x 44 x 30	1	China	Philips	399
				✓ / ✓	8 x 43 x 27	1	Korea	Samsung	249
	✓				8 x 44 x 29	1	China	Kenwood	399
	✓		✓	✓ / ✓	6 x 43 x 29	1	China	Quality Technology	349
	✓		✓	✓ / ✓	9 x 43 x 27	1	China	NG Enterprises	249
				✓ / ✓	10 x 33 x 27	1	Hungary	Microsoft / Ways & Means	399 **(D)**
					8 x 30 x 18	1	Japan	Sony Computer Entertainment	400 **(E)**

RECORDABLE DVD PLAYERS

We'd hoped to include DVD player/recorders in the test, but the market for these hasn't quite stabilised yet. Only two models were widely available when we bought the players for the test: the **PHILIPS DVDR 890** and the **PIONEER DVR-7000** (both have a recommended retail price of $2499). Both not only let you play DVDs but also record them off TV.

No models were available at the time with a hard drive for recording, though they do exist now.

The basic functions of the recorders we looked at are similar to those of a video recorder. You can watch one program and record another on a different channel, and program it to record while you're out or asleep. But unlike other recently released models, you can't keep recording the end of a broadcast while you're watching the beginning of the same recording. Nor can you record a broadcast and watch a DVD at the same time.

However, when you program a recording, you won't have to search for the end of the previous movie on the disc: both models automatically start recording at the end of it. And both let you 'bookmark' the beginning of particular scenes.

So, for watching DVDs and recording programs, these models work fine. But don't rely on them if you want to swap DVDs with friends. At the current state of technology, there's no guarantee that a DVD recorded on one machine will work on another. We tried our recorded DVDs on several of the players on test: sometimes they worked, sometimes they didn't.

Our verdict: Wait till the market's stabilised, more sophisticated options are hopefully available and (probably) prices have started to come down.

1 Overall score

This is a combination of the following:
Picture quality: 25%
Sound quality: 20%
Ease of use: 25%
Faulty disc handling: 20%
Standby energy consumption: 10%

2 Picture quality

We viewed standard patterns and still pictures, as well as some movies, looking for centring, brightness, sharpness, straight unwavering lines and colour purity without distortion.

3 Sound quality

We listened for differences when the sound was coming from three different outputs — stereo, digital and six-channel decoded (where available) — using an audio CD and a DVD encoded in Dolby Digital.

We also measured level linearity, total harmonic distortion, signal-to-noise ratio and channel separation, according to standard hifi sound testing protocols. It's in these technical sound tests that the players' sound quality varied. Most people probably won't hear any differences.

4 Ease of use

We performed various 'actual use' tasks following the instruction manuals. If a task could be done with little or no use of the instructions, the model scored better. We looked at:

- Remote control.
- Front panel controls.
- Front panel indicator display.
- Onscreen display and menus.
- Programming CD and DVD playback.

5 Faulty disc handling

We used a standard test CD with interruptions on the data surface and black dots on the readout surface to simulate scratches and dirt respectively. We also created a similarly damaged DVD with deep scratches and large black dots — more damage than you'd normally encounter. Most players would cope well with less severe imperfections.

6 Standby energy

We measured the power used by each player in standby mode or equivalent (when the player's been turned off by the remote control but is still connected to power) and found big differences between models. The higher the score, the lower the energy consumption on standby.

7 Features

See *Features*, page 44, and *Output options*, page 43, for an explanation of these and other features.

recalls&bans

Nowadays there are so many product recalls we may not be able to print all of them in CHOICE. For comprehensive recall information go to the Federal Treasury website: ***www.recalls.gov.au****. If you don't have web access, call the* ***Safety Policy Unit*** *on (02) 6263 2747.*

Companies often rent 1800 numbers for a couple of months after a recall is announced. If the number given is no longer operating, phone the manufacturer or retailer direct.

THE PRODUCT: Ikea has recalled **Snuttig soft toys**, all colours.
The problem: The toy contains small plastic beads that may escape if the seam breaks or the fabric is punctured, and may pose an inhalation hazard to a child.
What to do: Take it away from young children. Return it to your nearest Ikea store for a full refund or exchange. If you can't return it, dispose of it carefully straightaway.

THE PRODUCT: Ryobi Technologies Australia has recalled **Ryobi RPBV 2500 petrol blower vac** and **Homelite UT08117 petrol blower vac.**
The problem: Due to a faulty ignition module the blower vac may emit a small electrical charge to the operator after running in the vacuum mode for a prolonged period.
What to do: Don't use it. Return it to the place of purchase for a refund or call 1300 361 505.

THE PRODUCT: Heatcraft Australia, trading as **Kirby**, has recalled **P & M air curtains**, models TL1109, TL1112, TL1509EF, TL1512EB and TL1512EF, sold since 1997.
The problem: The sheet metal casing of the product could become live in certain circumstances. In addition, on some models the internal wiring uses green as a primary colour to identify current-carrying cables, which could be perceived as the earth connection.
What to do: Call (02) 9774 7155 or email pmrecall@heatcraft.com.au to arrange repairs or replacement.

THE PRODUCT: Briggs & Stratton has recalled **Briggs & Stratton 13 series engines for Fun-Kart go-karts** — all 5HP model series beginning with engine numbers 1352XX and Funpower model series beginning with engine numbers 1362XX, manufactured on or before 22 June 1995, with a two-inch high plastic fuel cap.
The problem: Fuel from the engine can spill if the Fun-Kart overturns, posing a serious burn and fire hazard.
What to do: Contact a Briggs & Stratton service dealer to arrange for free repair.

THE PRODUCT: Thermofilm Australia has recalled the **Petzone THAT 040 Basic Thermostat**, which is a control device for pet warming. All models without approval number Vo2218 on the product label are affected.
The problem: An electrical hazard may exist if the thermostat is used with an earthed appliance if the appliance becomes faulty.
What to do: Return the product to an authorised Petzone dealer for repair.

THE PRODUCT: Glenfords Tool Centre has recalled **Rexon 3 and 6 ton jack stands**, model number SP97019 (3 ton) and SP97020 (6 ton), sold through Glenfords Tool Centres in NSW, NT, Queensland, SA and WA between May 2000 and August 2002.
The problem: The jack stand may fail due to faulty manufacture and/or design.
What to do: Stop using it and return it to the place of purchase for a full refund, or call (07) 3391 8088.

THE PRODUCT: Xiao Trading has recalled **Friendship Frozen Salted Seasoned Crab**, sold in a 16 oz (454 g) round plastic container, with a use-by date of 30 July 04, in Victoria.
The problem: The crab contains a chemical substance that exceeds acceptable levels.
What to do: Don't eat it. Return it to the place of purchase for a full refund or call (03) 9587 9993.

THE PRODUCT: Weston Milling has recalled **Kitchen Collection bread mixes** with best-before dates between 04 March 03 and 27 June 03. The products affected are: white 2 kg, 6 kg and 10 kg; grain 2 kg, 6 kg and 10 kg; wholemeal 2 kg; soy and linseed 2 kg.
The problem: The ingredients list doesn't disclose an ingredient derived from milk that may trigger an allergic response in some people.
What to do: If you have an allergy to milk and milk products, don't use the mix and return the barcode to Reply Paid 227, Enfield 2136, for a full refund or call 1800 645 515 for further information.

THE PRODUCT: Byrnes Quality Meats has recalled vacuum-sealed packs of **roast beef, roast lamb, roast pork, sliced 4x4 ham, shaved sliced cooked silverside, Danish and Hungarian salami** in 250 g to 1 kg packs, with use-by dates of 10 Sept 02 to 9 Nov 02, in Queensland.
The problem: The meat may contain *Listeria monocytogenes* bacteria, which can cause miscarriage in pregnant women, and illness in the very young, the elderly or those with a low immune system.
What to do: Don't eat it, and check you haven't frozen it. Return it to the place of purchase for a full refund, or call (07) 4053 4522.

THE PRODUCT: MQF has recalled **Black & Gold sliced shoulder ham, 125 g,** sold in a vacuum pack, with a use-by date of 24 Oct 02, in NSW, NT, Queensland, SA and Victoria.
The problem: The meat may contain *Listeria monocytogenes* bacteria, which can cause miscarriage in pregnant women, and illness in the very young, the elderly or those with a low immune system.
What to do: Don't eat it, and check you haven't frozen it. Return it to the place of purchase for a full refund, or phone (02) 9335 1010.

THE PRODUCT: Aldi has recalled **Delta rechargeable super bright 1,000,000 candle power spotlights**, sold in Aldi stores from 26 September to early October 2002, with an Aldi barcode of 23003309, in the ACT and NSW.
The problem: Internal components may overheat when charging or in use and may result in the lens being released with force.
What to do: Stop using the product immediately and return it to your nearest Aldi store for an immediate refund, or call 1800 858 503.

THE PRODUCT: Nissan has recalled **Nissan diesel vehicles model CKB270**, model years from 2001.
The problem: The front pressure fuel line could fail through stress fatigue.
What to do: Contact your Nissan dealer for free inspection and repair.

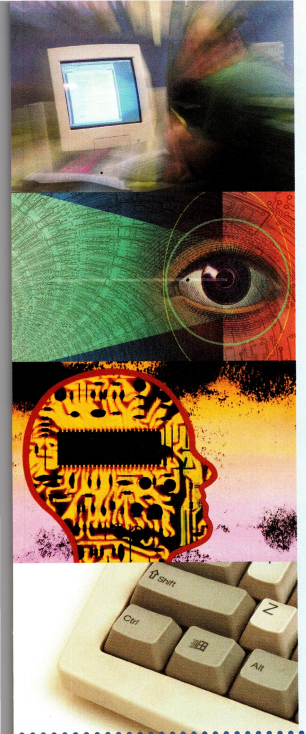
THE PRODUCT: Kawasaki Motors has recalled **Kawasaki motorcycle model VN1500-N3**, model year 2002.
The problem: The flange on the transmission output shaft may fail due to fatigue, causing sudden engine failure.
What to do: Contact your Kawasaki dealer to arrange replacement of the transmission output shaft.

THE PRODUCT: Audi Australia has recalled **Audi C5 Allroad** vehicles, 2.7 L petrol engine.
The problem: It may have been provided with a tyre placard bearing an incorrect tyre designation.
What to do: Contact your nearest Audi dealer to have the tyre placard replaced.

THE PRODUCT: Ozito Industries has recalled **Ozito Home Workshop MSH 125 mm multi purpose sander,** batch #01L, sold through Bunnings Australia from 30 August 2001 to mid October 2002. It's marked with approval no. Vo1201 and is rated for 230-240 volts.
The problem: The balance fan within the plastic casing may suffer metal fatigue while in use, which can result in it breaking into two pieces. At high speed, this could penetrate the plastic casing, causing risk of injury or property damage.
What to do: Stop using the sander immediately and if possible make it inoperable. Contact Ozito on (03) 9558 3999 or email enquiries@ozito.com.au for further information or to obtain a refund. The sanders can also be returned to Bunnings for replacement or refund.

THE PRODUCT: Nature's Sunshine Products of Australia has recalled **Nature's Sunshine Golden Seal 500 mg capsules,** sold in bottles of 100, lot no. 00134802, Aust L. 25442, with an expiry date of 01/07.
The problem: The bottles may be contaminated by capsules that contain bee pollen.
What to do: Return the product to the place of purchase for a full refund or call 1800 227 138.

THE PRODUCT: Mazda Australia has recalled **Mazda Tribute vehicles.**
The problem: A brake lamp switch malfunction may develop, rendering the brake lamps inoperable.
What to do: Contact your nearest Mazda dealer to arrange for replacement of the brake pedal switch, or call 1800 629 629 and choose option 3 for further information.



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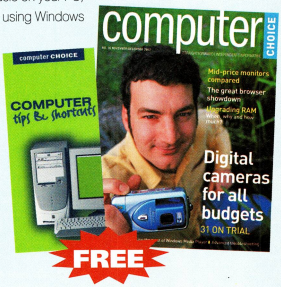

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* indicates an update of a previous report, additions or corrections to reports, small follow-up items or letters. For space reasons, the index generally doesn't include Choice Cuts, many other small pieces, and recalls and bans.

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hot chocolate drinks **Jul**
irradiation Jan/Feb
labelling Sep
meat pies **Apr**
milk Oct, Dec*
mince **Oct**
'miracle' foods May
rice crackers **Apr**
safety survey Jul
smoked salmon **Dec**
styling Jan/Feb
vinegar May
Food processors/blenders, combined **Oct**, Dec*
Fridges
300–375 L **Apr**
300–560 L **Nov**, Dec*

Garden
blower/vacs **May**
hedge trimmers **Oct**
lawn timmers, petrol and electric **Nov**
sprays (for pests and fungi) **Dec**
Gas and electricity deregulation Jun
Gas cooktops **Aug**
Gas heaters **May**
Glass, safety Jul
Gloves, rubber **Dec**
GM food update Nov

Health
cold cures, alternative Jun
contact lenses Oct
cough medicines Jul
insurance **Jul**, Sep*
laser eye surgery Apr
painkillers Mar
slimming products Jul
Heaters, gas **May**
Hedge trimmers **Oct**
High-octane petrol Jan/Feb
Home safes **Sep**

Index, four-year Jun
Inkjet printer refills Jan/Feb
Insulation, ceiling May
Insurance
car **Oct**, Nov*
health **Jul**, Sep*
Investment risk Mar
Irradiation, food Jan/Feb

Jeans, ethical manufacture May
Jogger strollers **Aug**

Labelling, food Sep
Laser eye surgery Apr
Laundry detergents **Apr**
Lawn trimmers, petrol and electric **Nov**
Liquid soap **May**

Managed funds Jan/Feb
Massagers, home **May**
Meat pies **Apr**
Microwave ovens, 20–25L **Jun**
frequently asked questions Jun
Milk Oct, Dec*
Mince **Oct**
'Miracle' foods May
Mobile phones **Jul**
customer service **Oct**
prepaid plans **Aug**, Oct*
safety and EMR Apr
Money — see Financial
Mouthguards Jul, Dec*

Painkillers Mar
Painkilling rubs Sep
Paint, exterior **Dec**
PDAs **Oct**
Pesticides, garden sprays **Dec**
Pet food Sep
Petrol, high-octane Jan/Feb
Phones
cordless **Jan/Feb**
mobile — see Mobile phones
Pies, meat **Apr**
Portable air conditioners **Nov**
Pre-wash stain removers **Nov**
Printers, inkjet refills Jan/Feb

Razors, disposable **Jun**
Rechargeable batteries **Jun**
Red wine blends **Dec**
Refrigerators — see Fridges
Reliability of appliances **Aug**
Rice crackers **Apr**
Rubber gloves **Dec**

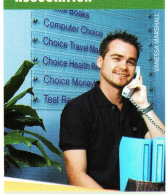
Safes, home **Sep**
Safety glass Jul
Savings, how to increase Apr
Screwdriver/drill, cordless **Jul**
Set-top boxes Apr
Sewing machines **Dec**
Shower cleaners **Jan/Feb**
Sleeping bags **Apr**
Slimming products Jul
Smoked salmon **Dec**
Soap, liquid **May**
Sports mouthguards Jul, Dec*
Stain removers
carpet **Sep**
pre-wash **Nov**
Stick (handheld) blenders **Mar**
Strollers, jogger **Aug**
Superannuation May
Surround-sound systems **Sep**

Telephones — see Phones
Television
68 cm **Nov**
set-top boxes Apr
wide-screen **Apr**
Travel deals, flights Aug
Trimmers
hedge **Oct**
lawn **Nov**
Tyres **May**

Vacuum cleaners, expensive **Jul**
Vacuum flasks **Aug**
VCRs, mono **Jan/Feb**
Vinegar May
Virus checkers Aug

Washing machines **Jan/Feb**, Mar*, **May, Sep**
Water blasters **Apr**
Weight loss, Hollywood-style Mar
Windscreen wipes **May**
Wine, red blends **Dec**

BECOME A FRIEND OF THE CONSUMERS' ASSOCIATION



The Australian Consumers' Association is completely funded by our subscribers, book purchasers and other customers. We don't receive ongoing funding from government or any commercial source. Your donation or bequest to ACA will assist our work of informing and representing Australian consumers. To make a donation or for further information, call Mark (pictured) on (02) 9577 3399 or write to: Friends of ACA, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204.

hardword

For a warm, dry shower, get hold of this Crompton Bathroom Light & Heater. Only $129.

The ultimate in water-saving shower devices?

This could be ideal for drought-affected regions.

A picture's worth ...

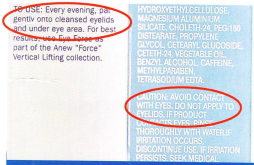
The pictured serving suggestion shows, on our reckoning, at least four Weetbix (with some broken in half), and possibly as many as seven. This is somewhat at odds with the suggested serving size of two biscuits — and with the added berries, it certainly looks a lot more enticing.

UNCLE TOBYS

A healthy breakfast supplies your metabolism with the necessary fuel to keep pace with the '90's. Uncle Tobys Shredded Wheat, made from 100% whole grain wheat with nothing

PERHAPS A TASTE OF THEIR OWN MEDICINE'S IN ORDER?

It seems the good folk at UNCLE TOBY'S failed to keep pace with the '90s — the changeover to the noughties has apparently passed them by.


TO USE: Every evening, gently onto cleansed eyelids and under eye area. For best results, use Eye Force as part of the Anew "Force" Vertical Lifting collection.
HYDROXYETHYLCELLULOSE, MAGNESIUM ALUMINUM SILICATE, CYCLETH-24, PEG-150 DISTEARATE, PROPYLENE GLYCOL, CETEARYL GLUCOSIDE, CETETH-20, VEGETABLE OIL, BENZYL ALCOHOL, CAFFEINE, METHYLPARABEN, TETRASODIUM EDTA.
CAUTION: AVOID CONTACT WITH EYES. DO NOT APPLY TO EYELIDS. IF PRODUCT ENTERS EYES, RINSE THOROUGHLY WITH WATER. IF IRRITATION OCCURS, DISCONTINUE USE. IF IRRITATION PERSISTS, SEEK MEDICAL
An independent dermatologist observed:
After 4 weeks:
• Improved eyelid clarity in 84% of panellists.
After 4 weeks:
• Improvement in surface skin texture around and under eye in 97% of panellists.
After 8 weeks:
• Reduced crepiness of eyelid in 70% of panellists.

Oh, the temptation!

On the one hand we're told to apply AVON Anew Eye Force to eyelids for "improved eyelid clarity" and "reduced crepiness". On the other, we're warned not to apply it to eyelids. What to do, to do...

"Seriously fun" is the best way to describe the C Class. Maybe it's seamless harmony of the interior or the extra feel for the road it dell call Gfrothers to arrange a test drive and add some fun to your weekend.

Test-drive a C-Class from $54,900.

That's an expensive test drive!

Guilt Edge Investment

96 Marine Parade, Kingscliff

- Excellent Ocean Views
- 2 Existing Shops
- 2 x 2 Bedrooms Units with ensuite & lock up garage
- 518 sqm Site with frontage to Marine Parade,

GILTY SECRETS?

"Is this what the wealthy husband buys for his girlfriend and hopes his wife won't find out?" suggests our reader.

HOW ABOUT A LITTLE HELP?

The Hard Word would like to thank all the readers who've responded with examples of outrageous ads, promotions and products. Thanks to D&N McDonald, K Bushell, A Brooks, M Brooks, D Burke and R Schmid for their contributions to this month's *Hard Word*. Please keep sending them in.

If you have any examples you think deserve to be on this page, send them to *The Hard Word*, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204, or email your suggestions to thehardword@choice.com.au.